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Vol. 118, No. 1 for November, 1947 Best of New Stories

THE NOVELETTE

Border Incident ..... E. HOFFMANN PRICE 10

Allah is the best protector. So runs the Persian proverb. But for Walt Hagan, American geologist exploring the turbulent frontier of Russo-Iranian Azerbaijan for signs of oil, the god of the Mussulmen couldn't hold a candle to his own Yankee wits backed up by cold steel in a steady hand. Particularly when the shadow of the bear—hammer and sickle clenched in each hairy paw—hovered over the border waiting to turn it into a seething trouble cauldron before ringing down the iron curtain.

SHORT STORIES

Hot-Rod Handicap ..... COLEMAN MEYER 60

A racing car, the Professor explained to us horny-handed dirt-track maniacs, is merely a problem in simple mathematics—a matter of adhesion, power potential, centrifugal force and some careful paperwork—and there you are with a winner! He almost had us sold on his theory, too, till that day at Santa Rosa when he tossed science to the winds and started in to herd his iron in the good old-fashioned way. Brother, that was a race for angels only!

The Fakir of Marrakesh ..... BERNARD SIMIOT 68

Translated from the French by Georges Surdez

As the sorcerer piped his weird flute-music there in the courtyard of that desert outpost of the Foreign Legion, the sinister head of a giant cobra loomed to weave before the eyes of soldiers, Negroes, Moors who formed a spellbound circle. Suddenly the monstrous reptile lunged and struck, the spell was broken and the crowd scattered in terror. All but Salem, the Sudanese. He stood rooted to the spot, stupidly swaying, even as the snake had swayed. . . .

A Buck to Grow Up On ..... ALLEN RANKIN 78

A kid's just got to shoot his first deer before he's really grown up. Everyone said so—even Pop. But Lew didn't like this kind of hunting, with shotguns, drivers, and a high-powered boat to wear down the wily buck. . . . Now here he was with Old Whitey, king of 'em all, square in his sights. And damned if he could pull the trigger. Could there be, maybe, more than one way for a deer to help a boy in the painful process of becoming a man?

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BE OUT ON NOVEMBER 7TH ◆ ◆ ◆

Temporary Skipper ..... STEVE HAIL 122
It was flying-fish weather in the placid Pacific and the *Adelaide* was only a mile from land (straight down, that is!) when she dropped her rudder. Everything would have been all right if publicity-hungry Captain Larson hadn't overplayed his hand. As Port Captain Pollard pointed out, after the Coast Guard and the newshounds and the photogs had had their respective sessions: Ships and reputations can be repaired—dead men can't.

THE SERIAL

Prairie Paddles (2nd of 3 parts) ..... CARL D. LANE 84
In which Haines Butler, piloting the *War Hawk* in her race with the *Dakota*, steers a peculiar course as he seeks to probe the mystery of the lawless gang that is terrorizing the upper reaches of the Big Muddy. And Telfer Doane is revealed as a cold-blooded player in the high-stakes game of intrigue and death that threatens the peace of the whole frontier.

FACT STORIES

Cowpunching in Paradise ..... NAT McKELVEY 74
Captain Vancouver really started something when he brought that first little herd of cattle to Hawaii back in 1793 as a present for King Hamehameha. The Pacific potentate immediately declared the horned "pipiwahines" tabu for hunting purposes and the "sacred cows" have flourished until today. Now the cattle-raising industry, with its sea-going, ukulele-strumming cowhands, ranks second only to sugar cane in the romantic Sandwich Isles.

Ninety Blows a Minute ..... STEVE FRAZEE 116
Long since replaced by the more efficient mechanical drill, the doublejackers —supermen of hammer and steel—have gone the way of Bunyan of the tall timber, John Henry of the river-stevedores and Gib Morgan of the oil fields—all the rest of a fabulous breed. But old-timers still recall the days of those brawny hard-rockers who pounded steel into granite at the rate of ninety crushing blows a minute, in the titanic drilling contests where a 180-lb. man was considered a mere stripling.

Snowman's Land ..... VINCENT H. GADDIS 130
For hundreds of miles along the Himalayan chain—through India, Nepal, Tibet and into China—the ancient legend persists: Of trails left in the snow by some gigantic biped closely akin to man. And the tale has been corroborated as recently as the late war, by American flyers forced down in the inaccessible fastnesses of the Hump. Can these elusive "snowmen" with their enormous footprints be descendants of the fabled giants of old—still existing today?

VERSE

High Sierras ..... NORMAN H. SOKOLOW 129
Where the vagabond of old pitched his tent with an eye
To the nuggets in the ground and the gold in the sky.

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Cover painted for Adventure *by Rafael DeSoto*
Kenneth S. White, Editor

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

E. HOFFMANN PRICE'S notations which he sent along with "Border Incident" which appears on page 10 this month are as interesting to us in many ways as was the story itself. It's a long yarn and the author didn't spare the horses with the accompanying documentation. Witness—

I have been talking recently with a man who has spent considerable time in Baku, the capital of Soviet Azerbaijan. He explains—

"The Azerbaijani are a Tyurkic people as distinct from the Irani as were the Ukrainians in pre-war Poland. That is, the ethnic, linguistic and cultural border is at least one hundred miles south of the formal U.S.S.R.-Iran political border. The Persian Azerbaijani look to Soviet Azerbaijan as their homeland, and yearn to be reunited with it. Persian aristocrats, in Teheran, regard the non-Persian-speaking Azerbaijani as savages.

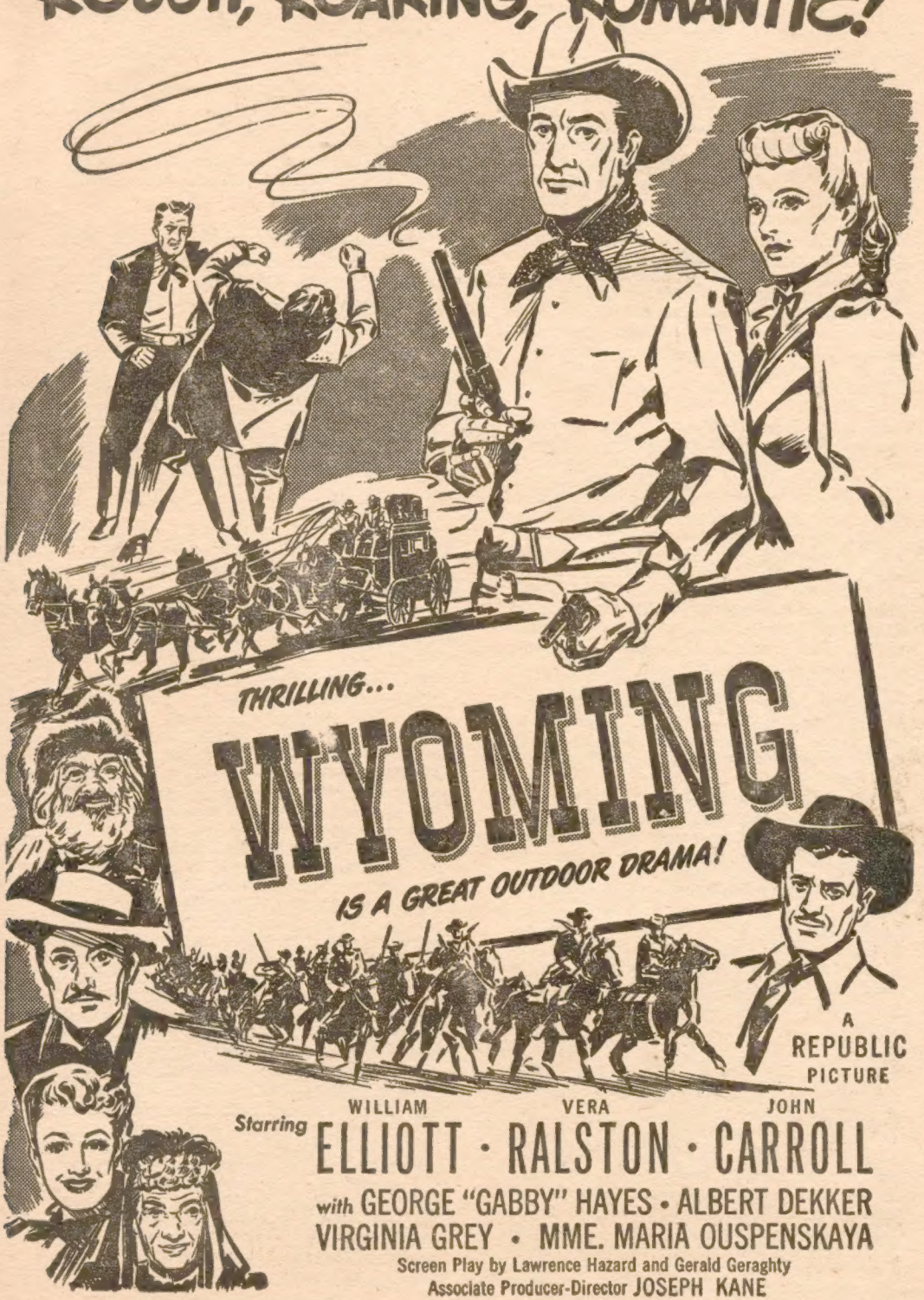
"The Azerbaijani are in reality the ancient Tatar tribes no czar or khan ever subdued entirely. Their historic stamping grounds are the west coast of the Caspian and adjoining hinterlands. The present Soviet-Iran frontier is a mere political scribble on a map, expressing no real demarcation in a human sense. There are about 5,000,000 Turco-Tatars on the Soviet side of the border, building a powerful modern industrial state; their capital, Baku, is the third largest city in the U.S.S.R., with a population of over one million, governed by the Turco-Tatars themselves. Cut off on the Iranian side of the border are about 2,000,000 more Turco-Tatars, some of whom are dissatisfied with Persian rule (to put it mildly) and look to the Soviet side of the border for a better deal. Others do not. Time will tell who gets what. Meanwhile, think of these Azerbaijani as the Sudeten Germans of a future Near Eastern war. The present lull is merely an armed truce."

Here is another statement, from an entirely different source: "In a region where land rents often amount to two-thirds of the annual crops a demand for agrarian reform has also been strong. . . . Similarities of language and culture with the neighboring regions of Russia might have been expected to do something to offset the natural dislike for foreign intervention. And Russian strong-arm methods seems not to have been resented at first, for reports from Tabriz agree that in the early months of its existence the autonomous regime (i.e., the Russian controlled Azerbaijani Republic which ended late in 1946, when the Persians ran the Russian troops out of the province) was welcomed by a great majority of the peasantry. The same sources attribute its loss of popularity since then to abuses committed by the Democrats (i.e., the Communist-backed *Tudeh* group). That regime began to 'take too much for itself.' The peasants, willing enough to expropriate the landlords, apparently resented contributions to the government. . . ."

In other words, the saviors of the Common Man saved him from his traditional oppressor to pillage him themselves. Out of a great heap of conflicting statements, a few things are clear: that the short lived Azerbaijani Republic existed only because Russian troops

(Continued on page 8)

ROUGH, ROARING, ROMANTIC!



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Associate Producer-Director JOSEPH KANE

(Continued from page 6)

came into Iranian territory to support it; and that while it is imperialism when a capitalistic power takes over territory or concessions in a weaker country, it is democratic when Soviet forces do the taking over.

So much for political background. I repeat —for the benefit of those who are still assailing me for alleged slander of the Hukbalahaps in "Datu's Dividend" in the January issue, instead of first reading my story and its accompanying footnotes and finding out that I had explicitly stated that the racketeers were merely IMPERSONATING Hukbalahaps—that I am not setting out to prove anything, or shape anyone's opinions; that I am writing fiction whose factual background is of necessity subject to diverse interpretations; and that if a reader simply must get all het up because of what he is pleased to call "imperialistic propaganda," he has missed the point of it all. Fiction is written for entertainment.

In my narrative, I have used the relatively incorrect but more familiar spelling, "Turki," in various compounds, rather than *Tyurki*. I have also pointed out that this bitter hatred of the Iranian for the Turki, the Turco-Tatar (some spell it Tartar), is not unnatural: that warlike race conquered and ruled Iran for some years, and with the well known iron hand. An incident like Pearl Harbor made us resent the Japs. Had we had a Japanese dynasty in the White House for a century or so, we would undoubtedly, after booting it out of the saddle, take a dim view of the survivors who lingered here and there in our country. This is not intended to justify the oppression of the Azerbaijani by the Iranian nobility, the landlords; my job is neither to justify nor to condemn, but merely to set forth a bit of background, and you shape your own opinion.

Hagan's command of Persian, while not part of the average American's equipment, is not at all fantastic. Dr. Frederick Bodmer, author of "The Loom of Language," one of the most readable and useful works on linguistics I have ever met, confirmed my contention that Persian is one of the easiest of languages to learn. He went on to say that the Anglo-Persian (Anglo-Iranian) Oil Company includes in its indoctrination for employees a course in that language, and that in as little as 90 days, a good working command is obtained.

There has been a rumor current for some years that I speak, read, and write Persian. This is not true. I have however "surveyed" that language, fumbled around with it, and laboriously hacked out English versions of a few couplets by Sa'adi: all of which sufficed to give me a fairly clear picture of how Persian is stuck together, and to give the opinion which Dr. Bodmer confirmed. Both in pronunciation and in grammar, Persian is far simpler, for instance, than Arabic. The modified Arabic alphabet used in Persian is readily learned, and is no problem at all to anyone who is interested in that language. So, while Hagan's whimsy is a bit unusual, his linguistic ability and I.Q. needn't be above average.

One more point: I do not guarantee the geology of the region described. There is such a formation further south; there are similar formations in the western or Iraqi flank of the Zagros. If any of you gents have been "walking out" formations in Azerbaijan, I'd appreciate your telling me what you actually did find. I could use a hunk of nummulitic limestone for a paper weight, or even for a tombstone, but for God's sake, don't throw it!

We can sympathize with authors these days who must be finding it anything but skittles and beer when they sit down to write fiction whose factual background is the subject of so much controversy. But the yarn's the thing in a magazine whose primary purpose is entertainment—and we miss our guess if many readers fail to get a boot out of "Border Incident," no matter what their political persuasion, pro-Turco-Tatar or anti-Iranian-aristocracy.

ABOUT all we know about Bernard Simiot (see page 68, this issue) is what his translator, Georges Surdez, reports in the following brief paragraph. Mr. Surdez writes—

The story "Salem and the Enchanted Flute" ("The Fakir of Marrakesh" is our own 'literal translation'!) comes out of a book "Route No. 1," by Bernard Simiot, published about 1941, about the auto road hastily finished across the Western Sahara between Casa and Dakar after the French debacle, when Britain controlled the sea lanes. The story about the snake is told the author by a civil engineer who worked on the construction, and I believe can be called fact. I thought it made a swell anecdote, was tempted to rewrite it completely, then modestly wondered if the guy might not, by chance, have done a good job, and limited myself to fixing up details of location, etc., and translated the bulk of it straight.

I was thrilled by the story because I have stopped at just such outposts, and I remember being jittery over little scorpions and an occasional sand viper. What I'd have done with a large cobra roaming loose, I hate to think. I once met one of those Marrakesh snake-charmers socially, and he showed me that his snakes—he had vipers and cobras, but the cobras were only five footers at most —had their fangs and he told me it was little use pulling them out because others grew to replace the lost ones almost overnight. He said that the tune did not matter, that it was a matter of shrillness—pitch, you might say?—and demonstrated with *Ain't She Sweet!* which, to this day, makes me want to climb on something high above the floor.

(Continued on page 139)

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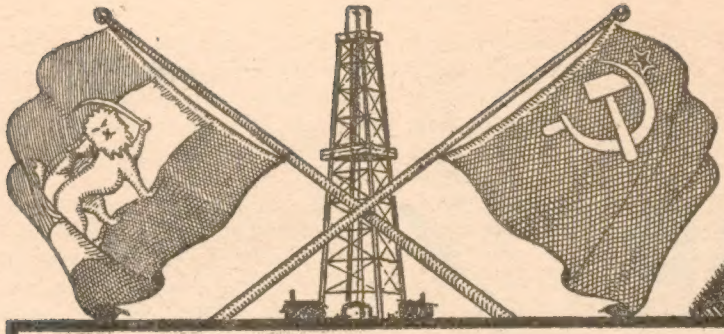


BORDER INCIDENT

FOR two weeks, Hagan had been squinting over the flat roofs of Khoi; his eyes were bloodshot from strain. He still looked for the dust of Corlett's approach, and the days of looking without seeing had put a kink in his neck. Hagan lowered his binoculars. He got out of his chair to pace the second floor gallery of the governor's brick palace, but as he moved, his glance shifted back to the road which threaded the orchards, and went into the rolling hills which rimmed the valley.

Hagan was watching the trade route which, coming from Turkey, connected Trebizond with the northwestern corner of Iran. Without Corlett, the instrument man, he'd be sadly handicapped in his oil prospecting, and in making geological maps the governor wanted. There was no

By E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Hagan booted his mount into the dry water course and Ayyub followed.

ILLUSTRATED BY
L. STERNE STEVENS

good reason why Corlett should have come to grief. Even with all the tightening up against Russian aggression, Turkey was safe enough for travelers who kept their noses clean, and didn't take pictures of the wrong things.

Corlett, however, had a camera, and didn't care where he used it; which made Hagan's imagination work overtime.

A tall man who had deep-set eyes, a long face, bony and narrow, squatted on the floor. He watched Hagan with friendly concern rather than understanding, for when a man vanished, he vanished, and the power was with Allah.

His eyes, blue and far-seeing, had many fine lines about them. His nose was long and narrow. Yellowish mustaches drooped somberly, accenting a tight mouth. As far as features, color, and frame were concerned, Ayyub would have blended into any group of Englishmen or Scots. Ayyub, a Kurd from Kurdistan, looked like a white man because he was one: one of the senior branch of the family, a branch so ancient that Walt Hagan and his kind were Johnny-Come-Latelies.

Still, there were differences: Hagan's old man had got a D.S.C. in World War I, whereas Ayyub's father had won a greater distinction, about that time, for shooting three Turkish tax collectors. Petroleum, however, offered an interest common to Kurdish mountainer and American geologist.

Ayyub finally said, in oil-field English he'd picked up in southern Iran, "He ain't coming any way at all. What he want to see Turkey for, nothing but Turks there."

Hagan glanced impatiently at his watch and grumbled, "Wait, wait, wait! What's keeping the governor so busy he can't see us?"

"We got no place to go," Ayyub answered, placidly; he still couldn't understand why the boss developed such an itch about one instrument man who had insisted on a sightseeing detour before getting to work.

HAGAN leaned over the parapet and looked down into the broad street, which was straighter and cleaner than any he had seen elsewhere in Iran. Water followed a stone-lined channel in the center. The men who lounged in doorways, or stalked toward the bazaar, had slipped back into their old ways. Instead of hats, some wore skullcaps, and others, turbans. A good many women had resumed the forbidden veil. The new Shah was letting some of his late father's social reforms lapse; after all, wiping out the effects of months of Russian occupation of Azerbaijan Province was more important than modernizing the country's dress.

For a moment, Hagan forgot both Corlett and the governor's delayed audience. "Hey, what's this! Pitching their tents at the man's front door."

Ayuub came to look, and then explained, "Sit down strike. It mean, the governor is a stinker, they camp here till he does right."

"Another election like the January mess?"

"Heck, no. Is you."

"Me?"

"Sure," the Kurd affirmed. "They don't want looking for oil in the hills. That's what I hear in the bazaar."

The objectors built fires to make tea. They sat down to eat flaps of bread, and dried apricots. Tobacco smokers and opium smokers were evenly divided. The Governor of Khoi had apparently acquired a permanent problem. Presently, however, it became clear that he intended to do something about it.

Soldiers, marching down the street, halted in front of the palace. There they formed a line to keep newly arrived strikers from joining those already encamped. There might not be a riot if the cordon kept those already there from airing their griefs to the gathering crowd.

At last the governor's major-domo came to the gallery. He bowed, and made the old-fashioned pretense of picking dust from the floor, and putting it on his forehead. He addressed Hagan in Persian: "Allied to Greatness, I beg leave to represent that His Highness, Faraj'ullah Khan, invites you into his Exalted Presence."

Hagan, who had concealed his knowledge of Persian, betrayed not a flicker of comprehension. Ayyub translated, a bit freely, "He's shaken out the lead, he wants to see us."

Hagan said, "Damn high time."

Ayyub rendered that as follows: "May I be thy sacrifice! My distinguished

master commands me to say that Your Honor is very kind. May the Governor's kindness never be less! The least of the slaves awaits guidance into the Exalted Presence of the Repository of Greatness, Faraj'ullah Khan, may his dignity endure!"

Thus far, Ayyub, unlike many interpreters, had not double-crossed Hagan. Neither had any of the governor's functionaries dropped asides in their native

Hagan leaned over the parapet and looked down into the broad street.

tongue to suggest that they were working against Hagan. They had not even referred to him as a pig-lover, or the offspring of a lewd woman and a donkey. However, the citizens of Khoi, judging from the crowd outside, did have some such notions.

Faraj'ullah Khan received Hagan and Ayyub in a large room which must have looked much better before the installation of an enormous radio, a muddle of American furniture, and a clutter of framed pictures. The governor wore a tweed suit. He was broad shouldered, a chunky man with a solid face, a magnificent nose, and dark eyes which glowed from beneath heavy brows.

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, Mr. Hagan," he said, cordially. "Sit down, please." Then as an attendant served glasses of tea, and a tray of cakes and ripe apricots, Faraj'ullah went on, "I've been frightfully busy."

Hagan grimaced wryly, and tapped the binoculars he had handed to Ayyub. "So have I. Looking at the skyline."

"I've radioed the Turkish authorities about Mr. Corlett. I learned that he had arrived in Van, and had left for Saray, not far from the border. But he never reached Saray."

The governor was earnest and solicitous. Hagan couldn't remember ever having met a more whole-hearted man. On the other hand, Hagan hadn't ever heard of any Asiatic government's admitting that a man had vanished in its territory. The Turkish authorities couldn't possibly have sent any such answer.

Faraj'ullah leaned closer to add, confidentially, "Still, I have a way of meeting the emergency. I've sent for my nephew, Khudayar Khan. Educated at Stanford. He speaks better English than I do."

"He couldn't possibly, Your Exellency," Hagan said, by way of politeness, and to hide his dismay; for while competent Iranian engineers undoubtedly could exist, there must be a reason for so many foreigners having been called in to develop the country. "I don't think your nephew would care for anything as unpretentious as being instrument man."

"He wishes to get practical experiences," the governor suavely explained as the third glass of tea was poured, "under supervision other than that of a fellow Iranian. Since only you will correct his mistakes, none of his own people will know that he made any."

"I'd like to meet him."

Hagan glanced about as though to find his new instrument man hiding in the maze of Grand Rapids, export grade. Faraj'ullah said, "Tomorrow. Maybe tonight. I'd hoped to chat with you awhile, but—" He waved a solid hand whose diamond dazzled Hagan. "But a delegation from up the river—"

Only a few words short of completion, the governor's speech of dimissal was interrupted by voices, by scuffling, thumping and pounding. Battered servants came on the run. The strikers, having crashed the palace entrance, were more deliberate. They moved in a group and maintained good order.

Ayyub muttered in Hagan's ear, "Those fellows want trouble. Don't move, is no time."

Since Hagan saw no destination worth trying for, he stood fast. The major-domo had been swept along with the panic of the servants. It was time, Hagan figured, as he regarded the delegation, to bring out the household cavalry—or else, have a smooth answer.

LIKE Ayyub, the visitors carried knives. The hafts jutted from their belts. There was no telling how many pistols the crowd could produce. The tall Kurd sidled closer to Hagan, and whispered, "I got a gun, you take it"

Hagan, watching the natives, palmed the weapon. He was sure that the transfer had not been noted. After all, this was a peaceful delegation: they'd left their rifles and swords at home.

Some wore jeans, others, baggy pantaloons. There were sheepskin jackets, felt padded coats, brocaded vests, khaki tunics, O.D. shirts, and a few knee-length Turkoman khalats. Foot-gear and head-gear were equally diversified. In one respect, however, all garments were alike in being a patchwork held together mainly by grease and dirt.

Nearly every man was an Azerbaijani—not of Persian, but of Turco-Tatar ancestry, kinsmen of the Golden Horde which had followed Genghis Khan, centuries ago, to devastate half the world.

Most of them were clean shaven, though some had scraggly beards and mustaches. Their cheek bones jutted. Their eyes were narrow, dark, and faintly slanted. Instead of the lordly Persian nose, these swarthy men had the small straight nose and flaring nostrils of the Tatar. They were dish-faced, bullet-headed, and short-necked And as he watched their deliberate advance, Hagan remembered that of all the fighting men who had ever met men like these in battle, none had ever hankered for a second meeting.

They'd been defeated many a time, these rugged fellows, yet they would never remain subdued. Hagan, hoping that Faraj'ullah Khan had a good memory, wondered what had happened to the cordon of soldiers in front of the palace. Faraj'ullah seemed also to be wondering.

His rich color faded. His cheeks twitched. Indignation, not fear, made his voice shake as he shouted, "*Hai, pedar soukhte!* Sons of burned fathers, you have my permission to leave!"

The group halted. One man, squinting from a hundred wrinkles, stepped forward. "We beg leave to represent," he began, in shaky Persian, "that we take refuge in your house."

The old fellow's skinny hand darted out. He grabbed an apricot from the tray on khan's tea-table. He exclaimed, "In the name of God," and gulped the fruit, pit and all. A sly twinkle came into his eyes. He cocked his head, and scratched above his ear, and eyed the tall Persian. The foxy old devil had pulled the governor's teeth, by claiming sanctuary, and by eating Faraj'ullah's food.

"You have refuge," the governor said, and with a suavity which amazed Hagan. "But from whom? Allah is the best protector. *Ismi shuma che ast?*"

"Yunus Manioglu, from up the river." The look he directed toward Hagan was the equivalent of a pointing hand. "It is unlawful, letting the infidel look for oil fields. It is against all treaties. It will bring us war with Russia. We take refuge from this wrong."

For all the stilted Persian, Yunus was not asking; he was telling the governor. Faraj'ullah concealed his wrath, since displaying it without the force to make it good would sacrifice prestige.

"Send this man into the hills," Yunus went on, "and only Allah can say what will happen. He is on your head."

During the moment in which Persian and Azerbaijani regarding each other, eye to eye, Hagan noticed how the air had come to reek from garlic and sweat and sheepskins. This bouquet would have been notable only in its absence; but another smell, riding the carrier wave, as it were, brought him a message. He caught the faint but unmistakable odor of crude oil. Someone of the crowd had been smeared with petroleum seeping from an exposed bed. While this did not in itself prove that there was oil in commercial quantities, the rich fields of Mosul and those of Maidan-i-Naftun had been so revealed. And Hagan remembered old stories of the Ghaur dome of the Punjab, whose outcropping had for years been concealed by the natives. These Azerbaijani sharecroppers and herdsmen, a long way from being fools, wanted no exploration in their hills.

Although no individual had made any noticeable motion, the entire mass had come nearer. It was as though the intentness of those in the rear had made them sway against those in front, who shifted bit by bit from the pressure, and fanned out.

Now Hagan heard their breathing. This was a nightmare in which he could not move. The pistol in his side pocket was useless. He, the cause of the dangerous tension, could depend only on Faraj'ullah Khan. Worse yet, they were not consciously closing in; they responded to a growing resolution to get a decision, and at once.

A human booby-trap, which the governor's pride, the governor's Persian contempt for all Azerbaijanis, could touch off.

Faraj'ullah spoke to the major-domo, who had returned. The man stepped to a wall niche. He brought a book wrapped in a silken scarf. The governor said, "There is no quarrel between us. What is lawful, that must be done. You are right. Let us swear on the Holy and Excellent Qu'ran."

Yunus agreed, and Faraj'ullah swore that no "*Inglesi*" would prospect for oil, or drill. Then he said, "You may leave, and the peace upon you."

Yunus and his comrades went to the front. After a moment of silence, Faraj'ullah relaxed, and mopped his face. "Give it

no thought—these Azerbaijani bastards—sons of the wild ass—protesting against progress—" After a glance at Ayyub, who would later tell all, he went on, "They're lucky! Instead of flogging ever last man of them, I swore there would be no exploration."

Hagan let out the breath he had been holding. "Well, it's been nice seeing your city," he said wearily. "When do I go home?"

Faraj'ullah chuckled. He spread the folds of the scarf which protected the sacred book from hands ceremonially unclean, and flipped the pages. "This is not the Qu'ran. It is the Diwan of Hafiz, though those blockheads couldn't tell the difference between Persian and Arabic. There was no oath, nothing binding. So you will explore according to plan."

CHAPTER II

DINE WITH THE DEVIL

AFTER a few words with Ayyub, Hagan turned to Faraj'ullah and said, "My man tells me that those fellows claimed it was illegal for me to explore. That it would violate a treaty. What did they mean?"

"They're fools, or else they're being paid by Soviet agitators. All Azerbaijan is infested by them—the Russians in uniform marched out, but they left an invisible army. How can it be illegal for me, the Shah's representative, to engage you to make a survey for my government? Your interpreter is a liar."

Ayyub deliberately spat on the carpet within an inch of the governor's shoe. He said in Persian, "Thou son of many fathers, I heard what I heard." Then, in English, "If His Excellency will bring the Qu'ran, I will take an oath."

Hagan stepped up to block Ayyub before the mountaineer drew his curved dagger to whittle the governor into bits small enough for *kebab*. "Your Excellency," Hagan said, "I came here to survey, not to get into a civil war. The last war I was in was plenty. Let's drop the whole business."

"You are a stranger," the governor objected. "If you understood what is behind all this, you would feel otherwise. During the war, the Russians who were 'defending' Azerbaijan set up an independent government, as you must know. We came back, yes, but there has been the devil to pay ever since. What those louts meant was that your working for me is a violation of the treaty our government made with the Soviet in 1921. Iran agreed to let Russia have oil concessions in Azerbaijan. But after the way they managed things while they occupied this province, it would be national suicide to let them in again. By the treaty, we agreed that no third power—meaning, England or the United States—should exploit oil lands in Northern Iran.

"You see, they claim that when your people or the English develop a country, that is imperialism, but when they, the Soviet, swallow up a country, it is only furthering democracy."

"You've got something there," Hagan had to admit.

Faraj'ullah resumed, confidently, "Your man was right when he told you what those dirty Tatars had said. But what *they* said was a lie. The treaty does not—how could any treaty forbid Iran to develop Iranian oil lands? Iran is constantly becoming more progressive. Bad for the Soviet bandits who want to control and finally seize our richest province, but good for Iran.

"And your own people," he concluded, persuasively, "are helping Turkey and Greece against Russian imperialism. I am paying you well. Also, it is your obligation as a loyal American to carry on."

Hagan caught Ayyub's fierce glance, and the ironic twist of his mouth. When he spoke, it was for himself and for the Kurd, his remote kinsman: "That is all very well, Your Excellency. But your way of disposing of the delegation did not arouse my admiration for Iranian methods. I might get the same deal the natives got, a few minutes ago."

Faraj'ullah took that without embarrassment, and without anger. This Hagan could understand. What puzzled him was the man's expression of triumph, and entire rightness.

"Wait," he said, and slapped his hands sharply. "Marouf! Turn out the guard!"

While his big voice still filled the room, two squads of soldiers pounced from two draped doorways. Except for the officer

in command, each had a submachine gun at the ready.

Faraj'ullah made a dramatic gesture. "You see how I could have disposed of the entire delegation? But that would have cast reflections on my regime. It would have caused feuds. As it is, those Azerbaijani bastards went away contentedly to tell the Communists that they had earned their pay."

He clapped his hands. The guard retreated as quickly as it had come into sight. Faraj'ullah bowed to Hagan. "Thank you for waiting on me. If you wish to quit my employ, that is your privilege. But while waiting for transportation south, be kind enough to think it over. Don't be afraid of being caught in a local war. A troop of cavalry will maintain order wherever you go."

The major-domo showed Hagan to a garden whose high wall had an exit. Ayyub found time to stuff his pockets with ripe apricots. He also got a tulip for his lapel.

As they walked along the back street toward the guest house, Hagan told himself that regardless of Iranian politics, and clashing opinions on the treaty of 1921, he'd do well to remember the old saying concerning the benefits of a long spoon when one dines with the devil. And Faraj'ullah's nephew, despite his American education, promised to be an unpleasant problem. On the other hand, Khudayar Khan's presence in the field would clearly show that this was an Iranian and not an "imperialistic" enterprise.

Nevertheless, before he was halfway to his destination, Hagan had shaped a clean-cut decision: "The governor can shove his oil fields."

Ayyub, however, had dismissed the matter. He said, "Sugar is scarce, better get some more now."

THEY stepped into the brick bazaar. Arched stalls skirted the wall. Others, back to back, divided the inclosure. Insects blackened freshly butchered mutton. Drapers and rug dealers drank tea with customers while haggling amiably. Kizilbash porters, short and stocky, carried hampers of charcoal. Hagan, following Ayyub through the crowded lane, glanced curiously at the second-hand stalls: there were pack saddles, mattocks, skullcaps, ragged garments, hob-nailed shoes and Kurdish shoes with upturned toes, sheepskin vests and felt jackets, alarm clocks, cutlery, kerosene tins and pottery.

You could find clothing and almost everything else in what they called the "louse bazaar," yet Hagan was more than surprised when he saw a camera and leather case. Though by no means a shutter bug, he had taken pictures in the field to supplement his traverses. This camera was sufficiently off-trail to rate a hard look: an Eastman "Medallist" whose front and helical lens and shutter mount made its appearance different from that of any other model, foreign or domestic.

Corlett, who owned a Medallist, had intended to take what pictures the survey required: this after traveling the length of Turkey to join Hagan.

Hagan stretched his stride and nudged Ayyub. "Remember Corlett's camera? There's one like it there, with extra film. Buy it for me."

"How much you give?"

"Mmm . . . start with twenty-five bucks."

"You're crazy," the Kurd protested. "No wonder they say Americans are suckers."

"Use your own judgment. They're worth three hundred in the states."

"You keep going. They see you, then I pay too much."

"He'll know you don't want it for yourself."

"That's right."

Ayyub, going to the stall, ignored the camera and began to haggle about the price of a *kursi*: the charcoal brazier which makes a little fuel go a long way. Aside from the fruit trees of Khoi, and the willows along the banks of the Kotur Chai, wood was scarce; the hills were barren.

Since the principal dialect of Khoi was Azerbaijani Turki, Hagan was at a disadvantage; nevertheless, a few words and revealing gestures kept him in touch.

"Why the *kursi* in this weather, O Man?" the shopkeeper asked.

Ayyub looked sheepish. Then, with the candor of the stupid when would-be craft has tripped itself up, he said, "Little Father, you are right, what in Allah's name do I want with a *kursi*? The truth is, I want a felt rug."

Hagan bogged down in what followed,

Ayyub confessed he was buying the rug at the foreigner's expense. This meant, "Sting him proper, and we'll split later."

though he sensed that they had begun to talk about him. Ayyub, after vigorous denials, confessed that he was buying the rug for himself, though at the foreigner's expense. This meant, "Sting him proper, and we'll split later, but I mean, do right by me."

Eventually, Hagan paid three prices for the rug. He glanced at the camera and asked, "What's he want for that thing?"

The sharp-eyed trader fairly forced the Medallist and case into Hagan's hand. Then a few words to Ayyub, who translated, "He says, what you give?"

For a moment Hagan had difficulty in answering. His hand trembled so that he had to set the camera down carefully lest he betray himself. "Ten bucks, if he throws in the film," he said.

The initials on the case had clinched his premonition. They were H. J. C.—Henry J. Corlett. The presence of the camera in Khoi made it almost certain that Corlett had come to grief on the Iranian side of the frontier: the last thing that Faraj'ullah would acknowledge since any such admission would cast reflections on his regime.

As he watched the bargaining, it became more and more clear to Hagan that whatever was to be done about Cortlett would have to be contrived privately. He might be alive, though wounded, or sick from exposure and hardship.

Hagan squinted into the shadows of the cubbyhole shop. He spotted a sleeping bag with blanket roll which matched his own. He and Corlett had outfitted at the

same store in the States. The merchant, he reasoned, was far more important than the merchandise, so he said to Ayyub, "I want to think it over. Later, maybe."

Then, half a dozen strides from the shop, Hagan halted. The swarthy trader was leaning from his archway, watching. Customers often did come back. Only a fool bought on snap judgment.

"Tell him to bring the stuff to the house after he's closed his place. Yes, that sleeping bag and any other camp gear."

Ayyub went back, chatted for a moment, and rejoined Hagan, saying, "Mustafa says can do. Bring the works."

After buying several cones of Russian sugar, they left the bazaar and headed for the guest house.

Firuz, the old doorkeeper, was relieved and surprised by their return. There had been rumors of an anti-imperialistic riot at the governor's palace.

The front room of the guest house was furnished with chairs, several sofas, and a table. Along the further wall was the usual brick bench, spread with long, narrow rugs, blue and scarlet, with goat-hair overcasting, which had come from Kurdistan. Smoking gear and carafes, pitchers and basins for prayer-ablutions, sat in niches sunk in the thick wall. In one corner were Hagan's instruments and field kits. He'd been packed up for days, ready to take off within the hour of Corlett's arrival.

After the porter's wife brought grilled mutton and buttered rice, cucumbers and sour milk, and a tray of nectarines, Hagan asked Ayyub, "What do you think of that fellow in the bazaar?"

"Mustafa? Just another Azerbaijani losing money to the Armenians. If you mean, did he rob Corlett, I say no."

"He might know who did?"

"Maybe he ain't forgot who brought the stuff in."

"That's what I meant. When he brings the things, we'll ask him."

Ayyub grinned ferociously. "I'll find out."

Hagan shook his head. "None of that Persian business, beating a man half to death."

"How you expect him to tell the truth then? Nobody but a damn fool tells the truth right away. A man tells the truth the first time, he gets beaten some more because the first answer can't be true. You let me tend to him while you take a walk."

"We'll have none of that stuff."

"All right, do it your way."

So Hagan gave Ayyub details to the complicated Occidental method he preferred to the simple Asiatic way of beating a man to ribbons.

CHAPTER III

THE BASTINADO

"IT'S simple," Hagan concluded. "Scare the daylights out of him. Then the doorkeeper brings us a faked message from the governor. That gives Mustafa a chance to offer the doorkeeper a bribe to turn him loose. We'll follow Mustafa and find out who he goes to warn. He'll be shaky and in a hurry, easy to follow, and when he gets to where he is going, he'll talk fast and loud to his friends, and he'll be telling the truth."

Ayyub admitted that this would work better than beating the soles of Mustafa's feet until he talked. While waiting, he put charcoal into a brazier, and set fire to it. As blasts of the goatskin bellows raised a geyser of sparks, his face tightened into a deadly scowl.

"You're good," Hagan said. "He'll move fast when he gets his chance to leave."

"What if he has a porter to bring the stuff?"

"All the better. I figured on that."

Hagan, however, had no time to explain that variation, for Mustafa arrived alone. He dumped the bedding roll on the floor, unslung the camera from his neck, and sat down to dicker.

The Azerbaijani shopkeeper, like most of his race, was solid and stocky. A shrewd fellow, with sharp eyes and quick gestures, yet withal straightforward, being neither obsequious nor oily. Hagan was tempted to lay his cards on the table. Since even a psychological third degree went against the grain, he broke in on Ayyub's bargaining.

"Buy it, the price is right." He surprised both interpreter and Mustafa by saying in Persian, "You have sold, and I have bought. A thing done, it has an end."

When Ayyub paid the man, Hagan de-

manded, "Who brought these things to you?"

"I have sold, you have bought," Mustafa retorted, "and a thing done has an end."

"This is a beginning, O Man! Look—" Hagan pointed. "See how my bed roll and this one are the same. See the writing on the camera case. All this belongs to a friend who should have met me here. He was robbed. Maybe he is dead. I want the truth. Tell me, and you won't lose by it."

"I never saw the man before."

"What did he look like?"

"Would I look at him, or what I bought?"

Ayyub's scowl showed that he was losing patience with Hagan; his biting glance meant, "When you're through playing, we'll get to business." He got up, and walked over to where the brazier was kept out of sight, behind the heap of luggage. He stooped, straightened up, and gave Hagan a questioning glance. Hagan, shaking his head, turned back to Mustafa.

"Don't tell me you do not watch a man's face to see how much he will pay, or how little he will accept."

"He looked like any other man from the hills. He was a donkey driver. I never saw him in Khoi before, and I've kept shop for twenty years."

Hagan sensed that he was getting at least a half-truth. Surprise at meeting a *frangi* who spoke Persian might have shaken Mustafa's stubbornness; perhaps his having received a good price for the loot had made an impression. Yet it was also clear to Hagan that he had got all he was going to get. Mustafa had told his story and he was sticking to it. His face had become stolid, doggedly resolute. He sidestepped, flashed a sharp glance right and left. But before the man could bolt for the front, Hagan lunged for him.

"I'm not through with you!"

Mustafa twisted to elude Hagan. At the same time he snatched for the knife whose haft was concealed by his coat. Until that revealing gesture, Hagan had not suspected the presence of the weapon. He swung on Mustafa, closing in enough to grab the man's wrist. Before the blade could come into line, he clipped him with his fist.

Mustafa crumpled to the floor as Ayyub, knife ready, darted from behind the luggage. "What I tell you?" the Kurd gasped. "All right, now we find out, these fellow no good!"

Blood dripped from a graze on Hagan's forearm. He eyed the Azerbaijani who lay sprawled on the rug. Hagan's stomach was more than uneasy from seeing the curved blade which had come within a split second of ripping him open.

"His turn for a scare," Hagan said, shakily. "Where's the rope?"

Ayyub got some pack saddle lashings. "How come you talk *Farsi*? Where did you learn?"

"Let's get this over with first."

Ayyub grimaced his approval of a man who didn't strut his entire stock of knowledge the first day, or the second either.

Mustafa was out for a long count. Nevertheless, Ayyub lost his chance to truss him for questioning. He dropped the cord, and exclaimed, "Police in front. Go talk, talk plenty!"

Though his insistence set Hagan into motion, Hagan nevertheless looked back, and understood: Ayyub was on his knees, and digging for the money Mustafa had got for the loot. Whatever the deal might be, the quick-thinking Kurd was out for every advantage.

HAGAN had no chance to parley. Uniformed policemen wearing visored caps had brushed the porter aside. They ignored Hagan, and by-passed him in the vestibule. Ayyub got to his feet and cursed them in Persian. "Sons of many fathers, get out!" He pointed to Hagan. "This is the governor's friend, he'll have you whipped to pieces."

"What do they want?" Hagan demanded.

Ayyub asked, and then translated, "They come to take this fellow." He booted Mustafa, who had got to his knees, and laid him out. "They are sorry to bother, but this fellow arrested for the governor."

"Tell 'em they're welcome."

"They want the camera," Ayyub continued.

"To hell with 'em. I bought it."

"The governor says he got to have it."

"They can take it, but I'm not *giving* it to them. Make that clear. And tell them they'd better be sure the governor

Before the blade could come into line, he clipped him with his fist.

sent them. We'll see him in the morning."

The police assured Hagan that they would be honored if he condescended to follow through. So saying, they clubbed and booted their prisoner toward the front. It reminded Hagan of the time he'd seen a pair of two hundred pound cops slugging a pint-sized Negro for resisting arrest. They clearly enjoyed their work because Mustafa was an Azerbaijani.

When they had gone, Hagan asked, "What do you make of it?"

Ayyub answered, "Police agents, fellows not in uniform, they are all over town. They see us looking at the camera and they know is American stuff. I bet you they make him tell how come he got it."

"That means, we never will find out. Not if it looks as if Corlett disappeared on this side of the border."

Ayyub dug the repossessed cash from his vest pocket, kept some, and handed Hagan the remainder. "I take ten percent for commission," he explained. "The police, they keep all."

"Take twenty."

"Enough is enough. Say, you talk *Farsi* like a phonograph record."

"No wonder. That's how I got started."

Ayyub seated himself on the floor. "We going to work for the governor?"

"I don't like the idea, he's too tricky. That nephew doesn't sound good, either. If he's like his uncle, he's a natural born Persian stinker, and on top of that, he'd have first class American trimmings."

Hagan went to the table and wrote a few lines. "Take this to the governor. I'm quitting."

Ayyub took the note, after promising that he'd either hand it to Faraj'ullah Khan himself, or else bring it back, rather than entrust it to any secretary. Once the tall Kurd was on his way, Hagan sat down to size things up.

His threat to quit would accomplish little, simply because Faraj'ullah set more value on prestige than on information concerning petroleum prospects. No matter how far Hagan ranged in his exploration, he'd have no chance of finding Corlett: there was too much country for any blind search to succeed. Then, having convinced himself of the impossibility of success, now that Faraj'ullah had arrested the only man who might have released useful clues, Hagan got busy with Corlett's sleeping bag and blanket roll.

There were no blood stains. Neither was there any message concealed in the bag, or marked on the outside. He'd not scribbled anything with charcoal, though the bag was smudged by that fuel.

"Either he's way up in the Zagros where it's colder'n Billy-be-damned, or else the roll was hauled to town along with baskets of charcoal," Hagan reasoned.

This surmise, however pointless in itself, gave new value to Mustafa, who might remember whether the man who had brought him the loot had hauled charcoal. The donkey driver, assuming there had been one, might have dealt with several shopkeepers in the bazaar. Their combined stories could be useful.

Hagan turned the bag inside out. There was petroleum smudge, and a chunk of oil-soaked earth which, after caking in the angle between a heel and sole, had fallen off.

"Cold, if he slept with his boots on," Hagan reasoned. "Or else traveling fast and making short halts."

He examined the cake of mud and eroded limestone. The latter contained distinct bits of fossil shell which, when entire, was about the size and shape of a twenty-five cent piece, with spiral convolutions dividing it into small compartments. In Eocene days, what is now the Mediterranean had covered much of Iran, and had reached all the way to the Punjab. The sedimentary limestone, form-

ing under the sea, had preserved the disc-shaped nummulites. Finally, the ocean floor had risen, throwing up the high plateau of Central Iran, and the Zagros Mountains which stretched for a thousand miles, northwest and southeast from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian.

The Zagros, after centuries of erosion, had been stripped of their marls and sands and gypsum strata; the foothills, however, protected by this debris, had kept intact their strata of nummulitic limestone which, at least in southern Iran, contained petroleum.

Oil seepage from a bed exposed by the cutting action of a stream did not by any means prove that petroleum in commercial quantities existed in the neighborhood. There were many seepages in Azerbaijan, as well as on the Iraq side of the Zagros Range. Some of them yielded enough to supply villagers with lamp fuel.

Nevertheless, finding out what had happened to Corlett was no longer a case of shooting at the moon.

Then Hagan remembered the reek of petroleum given off by one of Yunus Manioglu's sit-down strikers. That they didn't want any prospecting in their grazing ranges did not necessarily indicate that they'd robbed and murdered an infidel who, as he traveled, showed too much interest in oil. Still and all, it'd be worth learning more about Yunus.

Hagan resolved to see Faraj'ullah in the morning.

"Morning—like hell!" he muttered. "They'll have the guy beaten to death to make sure he can't sound off anything that'll show Corlett was nailed in this district."

He grabbed his hat. By night, no one would notice that he was a foreigner. He dropped a geologist's hammer into his side pocket, just in case of emergencies.

Hagan had barely cleared the door when Ayyub loomed up.

"You come right now," the Kurd said. "Faraj'ullah says he want you to see how he makes people talk. Mustafa say something pretty quick."

"I was afraid of that."

Ayyub read Hagan's voice. He had nothing to say, but his face showed that it was at times very trying to work for a blockhead.

FARAJ'ULLAH himself had come into the small courtyard in which four executioners had been giving Mustafa a preliminary workout. The shopkeeper lay on the straw and rubbish and manure which littered the paving. His breathing was slow and rasping. Sweat steamed from the blood-caked shirt which stuck to him.

Faraj'ullah got out of his chair to greet Hagan.

"So far," he said affably, "this fellow has admitted nothing, but he will talk when they set to work with the bastinado. I've seen to it that he's had no chance to bribe my men to strike lightly."

Hagan tried not to grimace at the spectacle. This was Iranian business—and despite some centuries of it, the country was far from depopulated. By way of concealing his distaste, he remarked, "Wouldn't it be hard to fake a flogging like that?"

"You'd be amazed what an expert can do." He spoke a few words to a police officer, who shouted to the four who waited for Mustafa to recover. They drenched the prisoner with cold water. As the man gasped and shook himself, two stooped to pick up the ends of the *felek*, a long, stout pole which Hagan had thus far not noticed.

From the middle of the *felek* hung a cord through whose looped end Mustafa's ankles had been thrust. When they shouldered the pole, his bare feet were lifted until his weight rested on his shoulders and on the back of his head. The posture itself would be torment enough, without any flogging.

A police officer squatted beside the prisoner to ask a question. The shopkeeper snarled, "God burn your father, I don't know!"

At the officer's gesture, the two with sticks laid on. Faraj'ullah said, "Please sit down, Mr. Hagan. Handy, aren't they? Even by daylight, it'd be very hard to tell, from here, whether he's getting it full force on the soles, or whether the *felek* is getting most of the impact."

Mustafa writhed. He twisted. He groaned, he cursed the governor, he cursed the Shah, he cursed the religion and the ancestors of all present. Hagan admitted, "You could hardly tell from the sound whether they're hitting true or not."

At the officer's gesture, the two with sticks laid on.

"He's probably offering them bribes in an undertone."

Smack—smack—smack—

The sticks alternated with production line precision.

"Those chaps can jar his toe-nails loose. They can pick on any toe you care to name, and in any order."

The governor's tone put Hagan in mind of another dignitary who had spoken with pride of the marvelous Persian fingers which had woven the finest rugs of all time, and written the most perfect manuscripts.

They were striking daintily, neatly, not paralyzing the victim, but making his

entire body jerk as though each stroke had been the touch of a live wire. The effect was plain from the man's cries and yells. His defiance tapered off. Presently he'd howl for mercy.

Hagan didn't want to hear anything of the sort; not after having seen and heard Mustafa's desperate resistance.

Hagan got up. "If this is for my benefit, stop it."

Faraj'ullah raised his hand. *"Shabash!"* he called, and the sticks quit their precision movement. Mustafa went limp.

"He'll talk," Faraj'ullah said. "I must convince you that I am leaving nothing undone to trace Mr. Corlett. Since you are leaving my employ without even having started work, I wish you to be fully convinced of my sincerity."

"Turn the man loose." Hagan spoke loudly, and with his elbow gave Ayyub a sharp jab in the ribs. "Corlett must be dead. Otherwise, there'd been word by now from someone wanting to collect a reward for helping him."

Faraj'ullah smiled noncommittally. "I like to please my guests. You are a guest, since you have quit my employ. Still, justice is justice."

"I'll work for you."

The governor thrust out his hand. "A promise, Mr. Hagan? Man to man, English style?"

"It's a deal, Your Excellency. If your nephew still wants to go with me."

Faraj'ullah said to the police, "Dismiss Mustafa. There are no charges. Do not keep his coat or hat. I am paying you their value." Then, to Ayyub: "Translate."

Ayyub obeyed.

When Hagan saw them giving Mustafa his outer garments, he asked, "When will your nephew be ready to go with me? How soon can you furnish animals and drivers? I am ready to go."

"Three hours before sunrise. You will be well out of town before anyone is about in the morning. The agitators won't know what has become of you."

"That being the case, I'd better get some rest at once."

"Please do so. My nephew will be in charge of the military escort which will accompany you into the field." He bowed, offered his hand again. "I am grateful, Mr. Hagan. Your work is necessary to Iran's fight to save Azerbaijan from Soviet imperialism. Meanwhile, I shall be doing all I can to get word of Mr. Corlett. Failing, I shall recommend him for a decoration."

Hagan took a step to the rear, and after another exchange of bows, he followed Ayyub to a side exit. He was not sure whether he had outmaneuvered the governor, or whether the governor had studiedly played on American chicken-heartedness. As far as Hagan was concerned, things had moved according to plan since sending his resignation to Faraj'ullah.

Once in the side street which skirted the palace, moonlight made it easy for them to get sight of Mustafa, who moved slowly and with difficulty. That he could hobble at all amazed Hagan, and spoke well for Turco-Tatar durability.

Several blocks from the palace, they overtook him. He turned to face them. If he feared further persecution, he concealed his fear. He might not have known that Hagan's intervention had saved him from permanent maiming, or from death; or knowing, he might well believe that he had been spared for private settlement, as a point of honor. There was no telling anything from his expression. Since he could neither run, nor fight, he stood fast, with the dignity of his kind.

Hagan said, "If the governor believes that you know anything, he will make sure that you do not live to tell it later."

"Khuda buzurg ast."

"God is great," Hagan agreed, "but that's no reason why a man shouldn't look out for himself. The governor will lose *izzat* if anyone can show that my friend was killed in Iranian territory."

"That is true," Mustafa conceded, warily.

"He had to beat you, for my benefit, but he was glad to let you go when I said that enough was enough. Tomorrow I go into the field, and then who will speak for you?"

This was so simple that Mustafa saw no reason to answer. A proposition was on the way, so he waited; and Hagan went on, "Here is half the money I paid you and then took away from you. Join me in the field. Faraj'ullah's nephew was not there tonight, he won't recognize you. It will be safer than staying in town."

"Why do you do this?"

"That is none of your business. If I

wanted you killed, wouldn't my man do it now? And would Faraj'ullah care?"

Mustafa took the money.

"I go home to speak to my family. What you say may be good."

He left them, and hobbled on.

Hagan said, "He may know more than he realizes. After all, this is something like what we'd planned, except that it's a lot better. We don't have to listen to what he says to his family or friends."

"You think he's going to follow us?"

"He'd be crazy if he stayed in town. You wait and see."

CHAPTER IV

MORE PRECIOUS THAN OIL

ONCE they had ridden beyond the orchards and the barley fields of Khoi, Hagan and the governor's nephew began their reconnaissance of the rolling hills beyond which rose the 13,000 foot limestone bulwark of the Zagros Mountains.

The resemblance between Khudayar and his uncle was marked; Hagan had noted it during the moment of meeting by lantern light in the courtyard of the guest house. However, there were differences equally notable. Unlike the governor, the younger man was thin-lipped: his mouth had an ironic twist not quite hidden by Persian affability. Khudayar's face was longer, and despite a well-fed expression, angles showed through. His eyes, black as his uncle's, were narrower, and not as prominent; they did not display as much white, and finally, their glow was penetrating rather than warming.

Faraj'ullah, governor because he belonged to an old family, took himself and his privileges for granted, whereas Khudayar, realizing that the old order was changing, had become wary, and alert; wherever the times threw him, he'd land right side up because he appraised what went on about him. While the first day's march did nothing to change Hagan's original impressions of his instrument man, he found Khudayar an agreeable companion; clearly, there was nothing personal in his pointed alertness.

The troop of cavalry which the governor had promised turned out to be a platoon. The soldiers went with the pack animals and drivers who made directly for the first camp site, there to wait for geologist and instrument man to complete the day's traverse.

Khudayar said, cheerily, "Don't worry, a handful is plenty. Only reason for having even them is that they make it easier to get supplies in the field. They show we're official."

Hagan looked out over the well-watered hills. "Don't see any sheep. Have they all been hidden because we're official?"

Khudayar chuckled. "You can't change instincts over night. The Shah's conversations with the tribal chieftains haven't convinced them that official looting is out of date."

Hagan, figuring it tactless to remark that those dignitaries probably had reason for skepticism, stuck strictly to business. He used the traditional cavalry routine of mounted traversing by time and compass.

"We're riding along an interesting anticline right now," he explained, "but we'll not stop to look at those outcroppings of gypsum and limestone right now. What we need is a general picture of the country before we test samples, or trace horizons."

"You mean that this is another case of not seeing the forest for the trees?"

"Exactly."

Toward the close of day, as they came within hailing distance of camp, they skirted a dome along whose flanks were outcroppings of red clay. Khudayar remarked, "Wouldn't you say this is pretty much like the Quawir Dome on the Iraqui side?"

"You've been making good guesses for a beginner."

"I'd heard a good deal about this project before my uncle sent for you, and I wanted a hand in it. As an observer, of course. So I made a few trips, and studied."

"You and your uncle," Hagan said, after a moment, "are looking for more than oil."

"For instance?"

"Holes in that treaty with the Soviet."

"What do you think *they* are doing meanwhile?" Khudayar retorted. "How many of our agents are working in Russia, compared with the Russian agents in our territory?"

Hagan made a wry grimace. "We're

asking ourselves that question back home. And damn high time!"

Some of the donkey drivers were taking the animals to the stream which rushed down the draw. Others built cooking fires of cakes of dried dung, since there were no trees, and not enough brush to count. Tribesmen, finally deciding that the party had neither come to loot nor to collect taxes came from hiding with a few black-fleeced sheep. Hagan sent Ayyub to keep an eye on the bargaining, to make sure that the soldiers attempted no extortions. He had problems enough already, without complicating things by feuds.

Once they had eaten their mutton and drunk their tea, Hagan and Khudayar plotted the day's traverse. "When we start making detail maps, you'll have plenty to do. Don't let this fool you."

"We'll use plane table and alidade?"

"Depends on the country. Might use hand level and stadia. Wouldn't hurt a bit if you brushed up on that every afternoon while the men are tending the animals."

Khudayar yawned and said that it had been a long day. Hagan picked up the drawing board and went to his own tent. He elaborated the rough sketches he had made during the day's ride, and set down his over-all impressions of the country. What he had told Khudayar about the error of premature sampling was true as far as it went. That fact, however, had been a convenience in that it justified his pressing on, rapidly as possible, until he came to terrain which had outcroppings like the specimen taken from Corlett's sleeping bag.

He got the wide-mouthed bottle and again studied the oily cake. He learned nothing new. He merely wished to digest what was there, so that if he came to the spot with a similar oil seepage, the face of the country, rather than any certain small detail of it, would demand a deliberate scrutiny. Hagan fully accepted that his intentions went well beyond the reasonable limits of science. However, as long as one doesn't confuse geology and intuition, each can assist the other.

So, while his eyes saw only disintegrated nummulitic limestone Hagan himself looked beyond what he held. He was studying Yunus Manioglu and the others who had swarmed into the governor's palace. While "up the river" covered a lot of territory, exploration would finally bring Hagan face to face with Yunus. The country itself would in the end make such an encounter unavoidable.

A MOMENT after Hagan put out his lantern, Ayyub scratched at the canvas, then thrust his head into the tent to whisper, "That man got here all right."

"You mean Mustafa? Those soldiers aren't doing much of a job of watching."

"He came with the fellows that brought sheep, and he didn't leave with them. I hid him under some luggage."

"He must've left town before we did."

"That's what he told me."

Ayyub lost little time in returning with the Azerbaijani shopkeeper. For a moment, the two were silhouetted against the stars. Mustafa salaamed, and stepped in. Ayyub squatted in the doorway, facing out.

"Allied to Greatness," Mustafa began in a low voice, "what you said was good. Soldiers waited in the alley near my house, but warning sharpened my eyes and my ears. I left them waiting, and I gave the sentries at the city gate a present."

"They'd not been ordered to look out for you?"

"Praise God, no. I went to the Armenian quarter. A friend gave me a horse. There was no search outside the walls, so I waited in an orchard until I saw your pack animals and soldiers leaving the city. There was still too much moonlight, but I could follow from a distance. After keeping you in sight all day, I joined the sheepherders and came down into your camp."

"You had protection enough with them. Why come to me?"

Mustafa answered, "Faraj'ullah is the father of many little pigs, and the son of a lewd mother! Whatever I do for you, I am doing it against him. He does not want you to find out what happened to your friend, so I have come to tell what there is to be told."

"If you know who brought that camera, I'll give you the rest of that money."

"When you asked me at the guest house, I was afraid to talk, because you worked for that son of a burned father."

Mustafa paused. After a long silence,

Hagan asked, "What were you afraid to say?"

"That man," the shopkeeper answered, "was from up the river. One of those who came with Yunus Manioglu to see the governor. He was dressed like them, and smelled of sheep and horses, and he spoke like they do. When you asked me who had sold me those things, I thought of the trouble at the palace. If I said anything about those wild men, they would remember it against me."

"You thought that I'd tell the governor, and he'd send soldiers after them?"

"That is right, Allied to Greatness."

"How did the man look?"

"Taller than I, and with a big nose, thin and curved. One eye has a white cast, but the eye is alive, it sees. From his face, I think he has Arab blood. It is a hawk's face, not an Irani's, and not Turki either. The eyes, they are not Turki, neither is the shape of his head."

"What kind of beard?"

"None. But the mustaches are black and thick."

The picture, however, was not as useful as it sounded, for in the hills, all manner of bloods and breeds had mixed; the only decision could come from Mustafa's own recognition of the man. Hagan asked, "Why do these men from up the river complain about oil drilling? What do they care about treaties? Who told them to go to Khoi and object?"

"Maybe they're afraid their grazing lands and watering spots will be spoiled."

"Only small pieces," Hagan pointed out, "and there is plenty of water. Did you ever hear of a treaty with Russia?"

"What do we know of treaties? Though there has been some talk of it ever since the Russians held Azerbaijan during the war."

"How did you like them?"

"They spoke of welfare for the oppressed, meaning all us Azerbaijanis, all us Turki speaking people. But they took the meat and left us little broth, and their favorites among us kicked us around in good Irani style."

"Then Yunus and the people up the river don't know them very well."

Mustafa pondered before saying, "Maybe they gave Yunus presents."

"We're going up the river."

"Khuda buzurg ast! But with soldiers and all these men, you won't get far."

"Then I'll go, I and Ayyub. You go first and find out what you can about Corlett."

"What will he say, the governor's nephew?"

"I'll have answers for him. He can always go back to Khoi if he doesn't want to go up the river. You'd better leave camp tonight, and stay out of camp, until you have news for me."

"That is understood."

Hagan got up, and said to Ayyub, "I smelled opium smoke after supper. Do you know who's using the stuff, and if he's on guard?"

Ayyub gestured. "He's over there."

"Let's go, that's Mustafa's best way out of camp."

They made no attempt at stealth as they went among the hobbled pack animals and saddle mounts. Once beyond the sleeping donkey drivers and soldiers, Hagan nudged Mustafa: "We'll keep the sentry busy while you move out."

TOPS FOR QUALITY

BIGGER AND BETTER

Ayyub led on toward the clump of brush where the guard squatted with rifle across his knees. When they were a few yards away, the fellow jumped up and challenged. Apparently he hit the pipe in moderation.

"O Man!" Ayyub demanded. "What goes on? We heard the animals stirring."

"Nothing, by Allah. All is well."

Hagan stepped nearer. "Tell him he'll get his throat cut and his gun taken away if he doesn't look out. We could have done the job nicely if we'd tried."

Ayyub told him this, and more, too. By the time the inspection was over, the man was wide awake. Meanwhile, Mustafa had made his getaway.

"What do you think of him?" Hagan asked, as they turned back toward the tents.

"He'll help. Because he likes you, and he don't like these Irani bastards."

CHAPTER V

MOVING TARGET

AFTER several days of traversing, Hagan came to a dome which not only looked good, geologically, but also promised to serve his purpose. As he and Khudayar rode toward camp, Hagan said, "This is where we'll make our base, at least for the time. We're not far from the headwaters of the Kotur Chai."

Though Khudayar's eyes became intent, he agreed, smoothly, "That will be handy for following horizons."

They circled, noting exposures of gypsum. Hagan looked for faults, but found none. If there was any leakage of gas, the prevailing wind drove it away. He dismounted, and went down toward the water course which had cut a deep groove between two hills. The slope, gentle and grass covered, was broken by sandstone outcropping. It was not until he reached the stream that Hagan saw enough to justify his first impressions of the vicinity.

They turned their horses over to the caravan men, and set out afoot. Presently Hagan pointed to a pool. It had an iridescent film. The unstirred air smelled of petroleum. The basin was of brown limestone. Gypsum overlay it. He chipped off pieces of the former and put them in his bag. The shadows were lengthening. It would soon be dusk. When they came to gypsum bottom, Hagan said, "Let's see how far we can work downstream before it's too dark."

Below the spot where the animals had been watered, the channel became deeper. However, the light was better because of a gap in the Zagros Range. Oil smudges and the smell of gas were more pronounced.

That night, Hagan and Khudayar pulverized the samples. Each was put into a bottle and shaken vigorously with chloroform. When the solvent had acted for perhaps half an hour, Hagan set up filters, into each of which he emptied a bottle. The filter papers showed a brown smudge; and when the liquid dripping from each funnel to the glazed saucer beneath it began to evaporate, there was a ring of petroleum.

"Would you drill here?" Khudayar asked.

"Not yet," Hagan told him. "We have to trace this formation to other outcroppings."

"This is tertiary limestone and pretty much like the formation of the north Mosul fields."

"It's interesting," Hagan admitted. "But so far, we're guessing." He gave Khudayar a sharp look. "And you're too busy wishing."

"What do you mean?"

"You find this a dull business. It'd be nice to hustle back to Khoi to tell your uncle that it's all in the bag. That the men from up the river didn't dare poke their noses out of hiding."

Khudayar lost his Persian equanimity. "You think I'm worrying about them?"

"You ought to be. I am, and your uncle was. But our map won't mean a thing if we put down guesses, instead of 'walking out' the strata that are exposed here. Confirm our impression or throw the whole business out, and look further."

"There could be oil here."

Hagan shrugged. "You might drill in the mosque at Khoi and strike a gusher, for all I can prove to the contrary. We're not magicians claiming to show where oil surely has to be. All we're doing is locating the most likely places, which is actually another way of saying, excluding the least likely, the impossible places."

"Since you are doubtful, I insist that we go elsewhere."

Hagan got up. "Let's get one thing straight. I am making the decisions. If you want to take over, send a messenger to ask your uncle to fire me."

Though Khudayar's face flushed, he controlled himself sufficiently to erase the outward lines of wrath. "I didn't mean it that way," he said, evenly. "I meant that observation is useless unless it is expressed."

"Put your observations in writing, and see later how the facts bear them out. If I am wrong, it is my hide, not yours. So, it's got to be my decision, and not yours."

"You don't understand," Khudayar protested, with patience which clearly cost him an effort. "There will be trouble if we explore up the river. My uncle didn't know how far you intended to go."

"If he expected me to stick in one area, that is his mistake. I don't decide where we go—the ground does that. I'm walking out the exposures if they lead me from here to hell. Let's quit bumping our gums, and get to work."

TWO days later, Hagan came to a substantial oil seepage in a valley where herdsmen watered their flocks. There were burned areas which indicated that gas often leaked in quantities sufficient for a sustained blaze. And as nearly as he could judge from the topographical sheets of the country, he was near an important tributary of the Kotur Chai. "This is it," Hagan said to Ayyub. "We don't have to wait on Mustafa. Get ready to slip out of camp when I give you the word."

The plan was simple: Ayyub was to cache supplies in the next range of foothills, and wait there for Hagan to ride out, alone and empty-handed. The preliminary to this was to be detail mapping, with Khudayar finally getting his first taste of being instrument man: that is, he would be busy with plane table and alidade, while the geologist went ahead, taking the stadia rod from one point to the next.

Instead of being chained or paced, the distance from station to station was determined when the instrument man looked through the telescope and read the rod-gradations intercepted between the cross hairs. Thus, if Khudayar noted an intercept of three and two-tenths feet, he knew that Hagan was 320 feet from the plane table. Then and there, he drew a line whose direction was determined by the ruler-edge of the instrument base, which sat on the sheet of drawing paper. The length was determined by the scale of mapping.

This done, Hagan would go to another outcropping, crest, or anticline visible from Khudayar's station, and again set up the rod. When he had gone to every important feature within Khudayar's instrument range, he would move ahead, while Khudayar brought the plane table forward to the marker Hagan had set up.

The initiative was Hagan's: it was for him to decide what had bearing on the problem, and what had none. The buckling of the earth's crust had displaced the originally level sedimentary layers, so that two apparently identical formations, cropping out within a short distance of each other, might actually be unrelated. Hagan's problem was to decide, from surface indications, the nature and slope of formations far beneath the surface. Although based on exact *principles*, the practice of petroleum geology was akin to that of a detective deciding which of the visible traces of a criminal had value in getting at the hidden structure of the crime.

Hagan, therefore, was following normal procedure when, back in camp with Khudayar, he said, "You get busy and plot these notes while I ride to the next range for a look at that fault I pointed out."

"That's a long way from the ground we're covering. It certainly cannot have anything to do with this area."

"I've often gone twenty-thirty miles from the square mile I was working," Hagan answered, "and the owner always would raise hell and say he wasn't paying me to take a vacation trip. And you know what I'd tell him?"

Khudayar pondered for a moment. "I cannot imagine."

"I told him to tend to his own business, or else take over mine and let me out. I don't mind explaining things after they're done, but I am good and sick of giving a lecture course every time I make a move. We'll do our talking tonight."

Without waiting for an answer, Hagan

turned from the tent and ordered one of the caravan men to saddle his horse; gestures served him well enough. He could feel Khudayar's stare biting him between the shoulders; he had been studiedly blunt, having had his fill of an assistant who always knew a better way of doing things.

He'd get news of Corlett, and that done, he'd consign the Khoi district to Faraj'ullah, to the Russians, to the Azerbaijanis, or whoever else wanted it. In no event would he carry on with an apprentice who insisted on parliamentary procedure at hundred yard intervals.

Then, as he took the reins, Hagan learned that he had taken too much for granted. Half a dozen of the Irani soldiers who had been lounging around earning their pay had come up behind him; and Khudayar was with them.

"You are not leaving camp," the governor's nephew declared, with justifiable self-assurance. "You are staying here, or I shall put you under guard."

Hagan eyed Khudayar and saw that he meant business. The soldiers, for all their being opium heads, were not sufficiently muddled to back a foreign geologist against a native dignitary. He said, "Nothing like an army to clinch your point. Do you expect me to sit in my tent and survey by remote control, or are you going to be geologist with a donkey boy as instrument man?"

Khudayar, who could afford a superior smile, enjoyed one before answering. "Neither, Mr. Hagan. Ever since you and your man distracted a sentry's attention while a stranger slipped out of camp, I have been wondering. And I have had Ayyub watched."

"What am I supposed to be doing—plotting with the Reds?"

"As a guess, I should say that you have been using this survey as a means of hunting Mr. Corlett. At the time, I didn't give much significance to your letting me take his place, provided that my uncle released that shopkeeper. He could have given you information, of a sort at least."

"Why wouldn't I have passed it along to the governor?"

Khudayar Khan drew a deep breath. "I spent only four years in your country. You people are still a riddle to me. I shall not try to answer your question. Rhetorical questions are not intended to be answered. They are a form of deception."

"I came to the right place to learn about tricky talk!" Hagan retorted. "You've not told me how I'm to carry on, under guard. Or are we going back to Khoi?"

"You could do your work with guards following you," Khudayar answered. "Or, we could go back to Khoi. I've not decided."

As Hagan saw things, this was as close as he'd be getting to a saddled horse for a long time to come. While he did not discount the chance that while in the field he could catch his escort off guard, grab a mount, and ride, the moment at hand seemed best.

Before Khudayar could give the soldiers their next order, Hagan took a step toward the man, and said, "Just a minute before you get back to your plotting board!"

Habit tricked Khudayar. Despite his epidemic of useful objections, he had been following Hagan's instructions, so he paused to listen.

"It's this way," Hagan continued, as he took another step. "See what I mean?"

What Khudayar saw was the pistol Hagan, contrary to custom, had been carrying all day, in readiness for his ride to meet Ayyub. Hagan was within arm's reach. He had his horse by the reins. He was now on the flank of the squad, rather than in front of it. The horse blocked the soldiers' view sufficiently to leave them unaware of the weapon which covered Khudayar.

"Tell those chaps to fall out and put their muskets away. Don't tell them anything else. The first man to point a rifle at me is perfectly safe, but you won't be."

"You aren't crazy enough to shoot me."

Hagan looked him in the eye. "You had sense enough not to risk yelling. Watch close, *and don't move.*"

He spoke in a monotone little above a whisper. The soldiers, slouching at the order, didn't know what it was all about, and cared less. Foreigners and the ruling class had one point in common: neither was at all comprehensible. But, when either yelled, you'd better snap out of it.

And Hagan yelled, in Persian, *"Dismissed!"*

They broke for their loafing spot. Khudayar had nerve; his mouth shaped a command to revoke Hagan's. Consider-

ing the man's surprise at hearing Persian from the mouth of a man who had never betrayed any sign of knowing the language, Khudayar did well.

But he was too slow. Before his countermand could be shouted, Hagan clipped him alongside the head with the pistol barrel. The young khan's knees buckled, and he dropped, clawing the turf. Hagan was in the saddle before Khudayar quit rolling.

Hagan's long-legged mount took three great bounds before the soldiers sensed that something was wrong, and turned about. They let out a wild yell at the sight of Khudayar. They blazed away without command. Instead of standing fast to take aim, they ran as if getting nearer would improve their chances with a rapidly moving target.

Despite wild shooting, they gave Hagan an unpleasant moment. Then the firing stopped. Khudayar was on his feet and proving that Persian lungs had the wind to command a thousand men in battle. The soldiers scrambled to saddle up.

For once, Khudayar forgot his dignity, and dispensed with a groom. Hagan, racing upgrade for the saddle between two knolls, glanced back and recognized Khudayar's chestnut stallion, a "wind drinker" who could ride rings about any other horse in the detachment. Hagan's advantage momentarily became less. Now that fury drove him, the governor's nephew didn't care who or what infested the next range.

CHAPTER VI

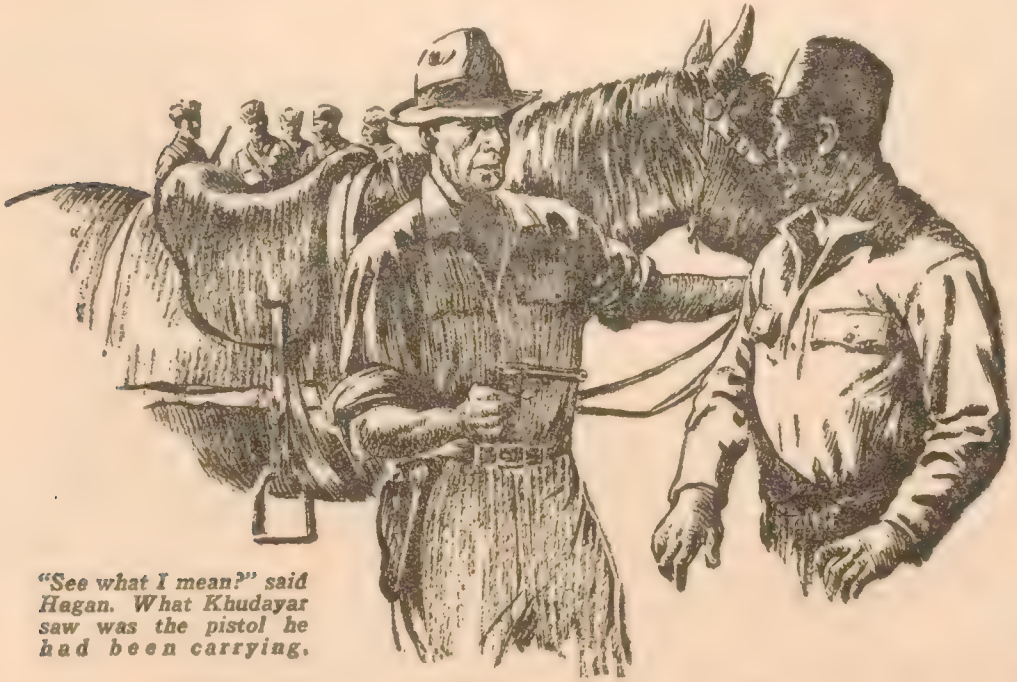
PROTECTIVE CUSTODY

FROM the ridge where Ayyub had been waiting for him, Hagan saw that Khudayar's splendid horse had given the pursuing Irani no advantage. A man to man encounter would have gained nothing at all for Khudayar, beyond a chance to shoot it out; and a dead geologist would be an embarrassment, not a prize.

There was nothing for Khudayar to do but wait for his soldiers to catch up. They were handicapped by inferior mounts, and the time lost in saddling up.

Ayyub had taken the dust cover off the sporting Springfield. Without a doubt, memories of his father made him say, "Bet I could pick that guy off the first shot."

Hagan grabbed the rifle. "Save those



"See what I mean?" said Hagan. What Khudayar saw was the pistol he had been carrying.

ideas on fun till you're back in Kurdistan."

"Hey, you don't want to shoot the horse, do you?" the Kurd protested.

Hagan took careful aim and fired from rest. Rock dust spurted up near the animal's near forefoot. Whether Khudayar made a dive from the saddle, or whether the startled "wind drinker" threw him, was far from clear; in either case, the young khan, a quarter of a mile beyond the most accurate pistol fire, had suddenly learned that he was bucking more than he had expected. Ayyub let out a whoop of glee, and offered a brilliant suggestion for placing the next shot.

Hagan ignored Kurdish whimsy, and nicked another limestone outcropping. Stinging fragments of rock and bullet stampeded the horse. Khudayar, however, was no quitter. Despite the evidence of Hagan's having met with reinforcements, the governor's nephew gambled on his rank, and the geologist's long-term prudence. He bounced up from behind the outcropping and waved a handkerchief.

Hagan declined to parley. Instead, he and Ayyub rode down the far slope, to gain all the distance they could before the cavalry caught up, and tried an enveloping movement.

"They got no pack horses," Ayyub said, "they can't chase us far."

The pursuit, however, hung on. There was no shaking them. Though at times it seemed that they had given up, presently they reappeared, having followed a valley which promised a chance to head off the fugitives. At last, miles into the territory which Khudayar had insisted on avoiding, it became clear that the young khan was going to risk everything on a final move. He forged ahead of his escort, for a single-handed attempt.

Ayyub said, "What a horse! Man, man."

Even from a distance, there was no doubt the wind-drinker was only well warmed up. His gallop was beautiful to see. Neither grades nor rocks bothered him. Bit by bit, he overhauled the slower mounts. Finally Khudayar's voice boomed above the thud of hooves: "Stop, come back! No one will hurt you."

Hagan, twisting in the saddle, answered him with word and gesture: "Come along if you want, we're going."

Khudayar closed the gap. Riding boot to boot, he said, "I am not angry. Let us forget it. This is damn foolishness. I did not tell the men to shoot, they lost their heads."

"So did I, and so did you. I'm not griped either, but I am going through."

Far ahead, the hills became rockier. On one shelf a *robat* loomed up. The watch tower of the fortress rose above a huddle of mud houses whose flat roofs made a step pattern. Flocks of black sheep grazed on distant slopes. Here and there, cultivated fields broke the expanse of grass land. A few poplars marked a tributary of the Kotur Chai.

"That shopkeeper can't help you," Khudayar said. "Those Tatar devils will murder you. That would embarrass my uncle. You have no right to do this."

Overhead, Hagan heard the whiplash *pop* of a passing bullet. Seconds later came the thin whack of a military rifle. There was no more shooting. However, in a surprisingly short time, a dark mass poured from the *robat*. Other horsemen swooped from around the lower hills. They fanned out, and disappeared in swales and draws. "You'll be dead or captured in a few minutes," Khudayar shouted. "Don't be idiotic!"

The approaching riders were the best sales talk that Khudayar had thus far offered. Hagan, keenly aware of the risk he took in carrying on, nevertheless ignored the appeal, and would not slacken his gait.

Khudayar wheeled about, and galloped back to meet the soldiers who had at last cleared the ridge. Hagan and Ayyub pulled up to watch. When the Irani troops got their first eyeful of the mountaineers, they bolted toward the rear. But for a superior mount, Khudayar could never have caught up with them.

A handful of riders bore down on the two who waited. As he watched them pounding across the valley, Hagan said, "I hope you talk their language. Mustafa could be almost anywhere but here."

The Azerbaijani horsemen surrounded their visitors. After a painfully brief parley, Ayyub said, "This is tough luck. We didn't get to the *robat,* so we can't say, *you got to give us a hideout.*"

"What do they say?"

"They say, give up guns and horses and walk."

These were men like those who had crashed the governor's palace. After three seconds of looking at their faces, Hagan said, "Well, I asked for it."

He dismounted, and with Ayyub, was herded up the hill to the fortress built as protection against neighbors as well as against the Irani government.

"These Yunus Manioglu's men?"

"He lives up there," Ayyub answered.

THE nearer Hagan got to the *robat,* the less he looked forward to facing the chieftain who had accepted the governor's solemn catch that there would be no prospecting in the hills. Logically, nothing should offer an introduction more favorable than that of having outraced a platoon of Irani cavalry: but there was no law which compelled logic to prevail.

Half-naked brats, and unveiled women came to watch the returning horsemen, and to stare at the strangers. There were dogs the size of Shetland ponies, deep-voiced and surly. The wall inclosing the *robat* and its girdle of houses formed a sheep cote. Horses were stabled in the ground levels of the various homes.

By the time he had come to the head of the alley which threaded the settlement, Hagan figured that his status and Ayyub's was that of protective custody. As strangers, they couldn't be allowed to leave at will; but neither were they prisoners, else they'd not be escorted to the largest house, which had a court of its own, and a watch tower.

The room in which they were invited to make themselves at home was lighted by unglazed slits. It smelled of horses and sheep and goats; of tobacco, and also, of crude petroleum. This last odor came from the earthenware lamps set in a floor stand shaped in the manner of a candelabrum.

Bit by bit, as his eyes became accustomed to the duskiness of the interior, Hagan noted Kurdish rugs, vivid of color and strong of pattern. Others had come from Persian looms, through many hands, and with more than an even chance that the final transfer had not been for cash. He was not surprised to see several chairs, a clock, a few framed lithographs, and a new radio with plastic case.

The dial, instead of being graduated in numbers indicating kilocycles, had calibrations marked in Persian characters. Hagan readily got the English equivalents of the cities named: Bagdad—Cairo—Ankara—Batum—Tiflis—Teheran.

The man who brought in tea, discs of bread, and a tray of dried fruit, was pleased that the visitors were so interested in the radio. He grinned, tapped his chest, and spoke to Ayyub, who translated, "He says he's got one, too. Everybody gets one out here. They don't cost too much."

Hagan wondered who replaced the batteries when they were exhausted, but saved that question for later. It was easy enough to guess; as easy as guessing that an alarming broadcast from Russia had sent Yunus and his men to Khoi to protest against the evils of petroleum prospecting. He considered the probability that Corlett had been detained because of misgivings aroused by radio propaganda.

"They've not cut our throats yet and don't act even as if they'd like to, so there's a good chance of his being alive," Hagan reasoned.

Toward evening, Yunus came in—ragged, wrinkled, sharp eyed, and cuddling a military rifle in the crook of his arm. The men who followed him were similarly armed, though no better dressed than they had been when they went into Khoi to protest.

Hagan saw recognition in the old man's face. Yunus expected a foreigner, one of whom he had heard, yet not that one who had watched him confront Faraj'ullah. His face became bleak, and then foreboding.

Hagan went toward him and spoke the very words which the Azerbaijani had addressed to the governor of Khoi: "We beg leave to represent that we take refuge in your house." He pointed to the tray. "You gave, and we ate."

Yunus blinked. His eyes lost their hardness. He made a visible effort not to smile at this mimicry of his own tactics. "You have refuge, you are my protected," he answered, not grudgingly, and offered his hand. "They told me the Faraj'ullah's nephew rode after you."

"He, and some soldiers."

"You speak *Farsi.* How is that?"

"For better dealing with interpreters. Though this one I have is honest."

Yunus regarded Ayyub. "All things are

possible to Allah! So the oath breaker sends you to find oil?"

"Yes. But that was not a Qu'ran on which he swore. It was the Diwan of Hafiz. So there was no oath. He told me about the trick as soon as you left."

Yunus eyed his companions, and grinned sourly. He was not as much outraged as Hagan had expected; indeed, the chief seemed ready to acknowledge that it had served him right, snapping at such an ancient device. He directed Hagan toward a chair, and after regretfully watching his retainers find places on the rug-spread ledge, seated himself with his "protected." After clapping his hands to call for pipe tender and tea server, he set to work questioning Hagan, going through the ancient routine of inquiry about travel, about weather, about people and events; and, about the guest himself.

For a few minutes Hagan bore with him, complying with the custom of the land; then, as if noticing it for the first time, he indicated the radio and said, "It can tell you more than I can. Out of your kindness, let me learn what has been happening since I came to Khoi, and left the city to get into worse trouble."

YUNUS snapped the switch. There was no static. Considering distance, and the intervening Zagros Mountains, it was little short of miraculous that a program came so clearly from Damascus.

"What do you think of that?" the old man demanded, when the broadcast came to an end.

"I don't understand Turki. Neither do I understand the Arabic they talk in Damascus. It is very fine, the way they speak to you in your own language. Do they know it well?"

"Perfectly! By Allah, I don't speak it any better myself."

"What did the man say?"

"Let Ayyub tell you. He is honest, you said. Tell him, O Man!"

Ayyub said, "Sounds like a lot of crap to me. Street fighting in Damascus and Beirut. Working stiffs are setting up a democratic government. They run out all the capitalists and imperialists. Moslems and Christians and Jews are all buddies now."

Hagan figured that someone was overdoing it, though the mountain audience had enjoyed the foreshadowing of better times in Azerbaijan. "Was there anything about what happened to the big landlords?"

"Didn't say a word."

"That's funny."

Ayyub gave him a pitying look. "You suppose this fellow would like it so much if landlords caught hell? He's one himself, and the boys with guns help him get his."

Hagan wondered what was happening in Egypt. Yunus was pleased to let him hear. That done, he asked about India, and got the news. According to Ayyub's transaction, the entire Moslem world was going Communist. "And they're getting free guns and free cartridges," he concluded. "Say, if my old man heard that, he'd become a worker too."

Yunus and his fellow Azerbaijanis accepted the news as an indicator that however the Communist government of Azerbaijan had failed, there would be an eventual comeback.

Presently mutton stew, heaps of rice and bowls of curdled milk were carried in. Later, visitors came to gossip and smoke by the murky light of petroleum lamps. Hagan was kept busy answering questions about the war which would break out when British and American imperialists forced Russia to defend her rights under the treaty of 1921.

"Tell them," he said to Ayyub, "that Faraj'ullah isn't violating the treaty. That Faraj'ullah is looking for oil for the Iranis."

But they had been sold a bill of goods. Oil and imperialism went hand in hand. They'd lose their grazing lands. Their watering places would be fouled, and that was the end of it.

Thus far, neither Hagan nor Ayyub had seen any trace of Mustafa. However, toward the end of the evening's sociability, they saw a man whose appearance corresponded so strikingly with the shopkeeper's description of the one who had brought Corlett's camera to Khoi, that each started, and caught the other's eye.

"That's the one," Ayyub whispered as the man swaggered into the room. "The nose and everything."

The newcomer had first saluted the house. Those squatting on the ledge greeted him familiarly. Despite uncertain

light, the thinness of his face, the curve of his nose, and the sharpness of his features were conspicuous. When the man came nearer, Hagan noted the white cast in one eye. Ayyub said, "His name is Kemal. He is talking about us."

Yunus, getting out of his chair, had half turned to greet Kemal, so that Hagan could not see his protector's face; but whatever the newcomer was saying, it made the others in the room quit talking.

Kemal gestured toward Hagan, commandingly, arrogantly.

The spectators leaned forward. There was a query in their stolid faces, and in their narrowed eyes. Hagan whispered, "What's it about?"

Ayyub answered, "He says Yunus got to give you to him for a prisoner. Yunus don't like it. He says he gave you protection, he can't do it."

Yunus and Kemal went to the doorway, and into the courtyard. The men along the wall resumed their tea drinking, and their long-stemmed pipes. They ignored Hagan as though he had ceased to exist. He needed no interpreter to tell him that however much his protector was master of the *robat,* a power from outside carried more weight than the old Azerbaijani cared to resist.

Hagan, thinking of the radio broadcast, and of the story Mustafa had told him, came to a conclusion which could not be avoided. Kemal had beyond doubt gone to Khoi with Yunus' sit-down strikers to observe the results they got. At the same time, he had gone to town to leave Corlett's camera in the bazaar in order to give force to Yunus' words: *"Send this man into the hills, and only Allah can say what will happen. He is on your head."*

Corlett's camera, that is, would in one way or another have been called to Hagan's attention, had not he and Ayyub noted it in the bazaar; Corlett's camera, and his luggage, a hint as to what happened to infidels who ventured to the source of the Kotur Chai, would make Hagan balk about going into the field.

Now, seeing how he had failed in Khoi, Kemal wanted to make good.

"We're under Yunus' protection," Hagan finally said. "But for how long is it good?"

"We eat his food, he can't cut our throats for three days," Ayyub answered. "For three days he can't kick us out. Or his men know he ain't got guts, he ain't the kind of man they can depend on him."

"How about the fourth day?"

Ayyub shrugged. "Maybe then he's got to kick us out, maybe turn us over to Kemal. If Kemal is big enough."

CHAPTER VII

THE BLESSING OF ALLAH

THE *robat,* Hagan learned that evening, was an architectural patchwork, a growth which lagged or hastened according as Yunus Manioglu lost or gained in the number of people who gave him their allegiance. Yunus, a feudal chieftain, derived support from those he "protected." Once his protection became doubtful in value, his men would look for a leader more capable.

Yunus said, "Protest against oil drilling," and the mountain men rode to Khoi to protest. Whether or not they had voted in the election of representatives to sit in the *majlis* in Teheran, Hagan didn't know and didn't care. However, he knew that if they had, it had been the vote of Yunus. To express a contrary choice would be treachery; the manly way to register dissent would be to walk out and team up with a chieftain with whom one did agree.

Hagan knew some of this. Ayyub rounded out the picture as they sat in a cubicle not far from the reception room. To get to it, they had gone up a stairway, followed a second floor corridor, and then descended a stairway. An opening cut through the wall of the reception room would have simplified things; but since the cubicle had originally opened into a courtyard, there had been no detour. Subsequent additions had introduced the complication.

Rooms facing outward now blocked the former entrance to the court, which had finally been walled in until it was now little more than an air shaft, with second story window slits overlooking it. However, the western wall was low, so that from where Hagan and Ayyub spread their rugs, they could see the Zagros Range, beyond which lay Kurdistan and Turkey.

The wall was no obstacle. Getting down the steep escarpment would be easy. To leave without horses and guns, however, was something else. Hagan said, "We're bottled up in another way, too. A way they don't know. We can't leave when we're so near getting news of Corlett. The way they figure it, we don't dare go back to Khoi, and we're not crazy enough to go into the mountains."

They stretched out on their rugs. Hagan was half asleep when he heard soft footsteps. He sat up. Someone, having come down the stairs, was approaching without a light. He nudged Ayyub, who after a moment of listening, whispered his answer: "Let him stick his head in."

Despite the gloom, Hagan caught the glint of the Kurd's dagger, and snatched the wrist. "No. Just grab."

When Hagan feigned a snore, Ayyub imitated the breathing of a sleeper. This guided the prowler. The soft shoes shuffled nearer. Hagan, crouching to the left of the low entrance, was able for a moment to distinguish the shape of the visitor.

Now the doorway was blocked by darkness. A match scraped. At the first flare, Hagan tackled the visitor. With his forearm, he cut off the man's breath. "Got him," he whispered, as he rolled with his half throttled victim. "Light."

Ayyub struck a match.

Hagan eased up. The caller was Mustafa, empty-handed and unarmed. He looked at them, blinked, and grinned understandingly. Before the flame went out, he squatted with them against the wall.

"That man is here. His name is Kemal," Mustafa began.

"What do you know about him?"

"He is important. He does not belong to Yunus. Maybe he is bigger."

"How many men rode with him?"

"Two. Only two, so he is a fool, or very big, too big to be hurt anywhere."

Ayyub made a sound which, had it come up further in his throat, would have been a laugh. "Show us how to get horses and guns and you'll see how big he is on his way home."

"That is easy," Mustafa answered. "Yunus will be glad for you to go."

"Wait!" Hagan interposed. "We can't knife Kemal."

"Not here," Ayyub agreed. "That makes Yunus mad, you don't do that way when you are a guest."

"I mean, we can't finish him on his way home. Kemal must know something about Corlett."

"That is right," Mustafa seconded. "And he wants you to be prisoners."

"Will Yunus give us up?"

"I think Yunus does not yet know."

"What does Yunus *want* to do?"

"He likes you, because the governor is your enemy."

Hagan recognized that last as a courtesy offered to smooth over bad news. He said, "What you tell us, it is good. I owe you some money."

"The peace upon you, but not now."

"How is this?"

"I may be robbed before I get home. Pay me later."

"We're going to follow this glassy-eyed man to find Corlett."

"Wonders come from Allah. Then out of your goodness, I can accept the money, it will save your excellency the trouble of paying later."

"You mean, we'll never get out of the hills."

"I shall pray for you."

Hagan paid Mustafa, who then said, "If that glassy-eyed man does not lead you to your friend, then come to the bazaar in Khoi. Half of what you now give me, I give it back to you."

The shopkeeper's generosity would have touched Hagan, but for the thought which prompted it: Mustafa was quite sure that he'd never be asked to make good.

Ayyub asked, "You go back to Khoi? And why?"

"I miss my people, and there is no harm in returning. Because now you are gone, and I know where, so I have an answer if the governor asks. With none of your people looking for you, or your friend, he can tell what he likes."

Mustafa got up, and backed out of the doorway. There he bowed, and put dust on his forehead. "The peace upon you, and the blessing of Allah," he said, and went back the way he had come.

THE night, however, had not brought the last of its visitors; the next one, and he came with a lamp, was Yunus himself. He sat down on the rug. He inquired after

their comfort and their health. He expressed his pleasure at their having accepted his hospitality. He omitted not one of the many indications which warned Hagan that bad news was about to break.

"I gave you protection, yes," Yunus went on. "Who would not? We took your horses, we took your guns. We knew not what manner of men you were. By Allah, there have been spies time and again coming as though the government wanted their heads."

Hagan expressed his entire understanding. Yunus again complimented him on his command of Persian. He said, truthfully enough, since Azerbaijani Turki was his speech, *"Mashallah!* You speak *Farsi* as well as I do."

Finally he got back to the horses and guns: "It is clear that you are two honest men. You are my protected. I will defend you to the last man. But, Allah is the only defense, and what if the governor sends field artillery to blow the *robat* down around our ears? You will be with us."

"In good company," Hagan said. "But, as you say, it would be wrong for us to stay and have your house blown down and your people shot, and your sheep taken."

"No, by Allah! A man seeks refuge, and he gets refuge! Allah loves him who protects the poor. Is it not written in the holy and excellent Qu'ran: Oppress not the orphan, neither repulse the beggar, but declare the goodness of thy Lord?"

"It is written," Ayyub affirmed, "as thou has said it."

Yunus gave him a grateful look, and continued, "But how much better will it be when that father of many little pigs comes asking me to surrender you and you are not here."

"You mean Faraj'ullah Khan, the governor?"

"Yes, by God, and his nephew, too!" Seeing now that he dealt with a man of understanding, Yunus warmed to his subject. "Your horses are waiting for you to ride in the morning. Everything that you need, it is waiting. There are men to guide you over the Zagros and into Kurdistan, into Iraq and to Mosul, where your own people are many. And when Faraj'ullah comes, we will call him an eater of dung, and let him look for our protected!"

"Something I should live to see," Hagan observed in English to Ayyub, who kept his long face unmoved. To Yunus he said, "Protecting me against Faraj'ullah and Khudayar Khan, that is good. But what of protection against this Kemal, this Arab who walks as if he owns the *robat?* Tell me—what debt do you owe him?"

"How? What? Whose dog is this Kemal, and what do I owe him?"

"He wants you to surrender us to him."

"I beg pardon of Allah, but you misunderstood. He asked, saying, *Do you surrender these men?* Meaning, to the governor."

While this could have been the truth, Hagan knew that it was not. He asked, "Who is Kemal, what are your protected to him? Doubtless he gave you your radio? And told you how bad it was to have oil drilling?"

Yunus looked at him for a moment. "Yes, he is a smart man. From Iraq, where they know how to deal with the

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"With your permission, I can tell you a few things."

"Speak, friend, and Allah give you wisdom."

"Listen, friend, and Allah give *you* wisdom. Now, it is this way," Hagan went on. "Make your peace with Faraj-'ullah Khan. Oil drilling will foul only a few hillsides, and only a few pools, and for the rest, it will be good. There will be roads, and in the end, you will buy a car, like the high officials."

"It is not the oil, it is the foreigners it brings."

"Why do foreigners come to drill in Iran?"

"Clearly, because Iran is poor, and it costs money to drill."

"Iran is poor because nothing is manufactured. No radios, no trucks, none of the things you rich ones buy from foreigners. This is because the Azerbaijani shuts out knowledge of new things. Your radio tells you to keep the *Inglesi* and the *Amrikani* out— and leave room for the Russian. Which is better, letting in foreigners who live a hundred miles away, or letting in foreigners who live ten thousand miles away? This hook-nosed man, what does he promise?"

"He promises nothing," Yunus answered. "But the radio speaks from Russian Azerbaijan, only a hundred miles north. There they make and build. Everyone is rich. There are no taxes. When we are in rags, they have new clothes, new pots and kettles, and all the guns they want. This we hear from our own people."

There was no use asking him if he had ever tried to cross the frontier to get into this paradise populated with his Turco-Tatar kinsmen; no mountain chieftain could leave his followers long enough to learn about the iron curtain, for if he did return, he'd find himself without lands, without fortress, and without men. So Hagan said, "When the Russians held Tabriz and the other cities of Azerbaijan, all during the war, which way did the loaded trucks move along Lake Urumia?"

"They went north," Yunus answered.

"Did any go south?"

"*Ya khuda!* Surely they went south, even as a camel goes home again."

"But the southbound trucks, were they loaded?"

"I heard of none."

"Neither did anyone else. The trucks went north with *Amrikani* guns, and food, and medicine. If the Russian way is good, why didn't they send the *Amrikani* things for fighting a war? You command a thousand men, I command one. Do you take refuge with me, or do I take refuge with you?"

Yunus gave no answer, because there was none. Hagan continued, "What you say about our leaving, let us think on it. With guns and horses, there is no place we cannot go." Then, seeing Yunus brighten, he cut back: "But your radio is a liar. Promise me a promise—if I prove it a liar, will you make peace with Faraj-'ullah Khan, and let us drill for oil?"

"I have promised you a promise, but the proving is yours! *Ya khuda!* If the radio lies, surely it will be good to deal with Faraj'ullah, that eater of unclean food!"

"You don't like the Irani?"

Yunus spat. "My people ruled Iran until Allah hated us, and let the dogs drive us out. Now we are dirt to the Irani."

"You are both dirt to the *Russki*. Why hate each other?"

Yunus, remembering his promise, got up and said, "The proving is yours. And the peace be with you."

He went out with his lamp, leaving Hagan to wonder at the obtuseness of the Turco-Tatar who expected to be loved by the Irani whose cities he had once pillaged and whose people he had once oppressed. Hagan's prime query, however, was on what to do about Kemal, and how to do it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WAY OF AN INFIDEL

IN THE morning, as they were about to go up the stairs to the reception room where Yunus would eat with henchmen and his "protected," Ayyub asked, "What do you think of it all? You mumbled a lot in your sleep, only I couldn't understand it."

"You didn't miss much. But I have a way of getting Yunus into a corner, and

then letting him out of it. That way, he'll listen to reason about prospecting when this mess is cleared up."

"If you're not dead by then."

"I'm depending on you."

They stopped and faced each other. The tall Kurd regarded Hagan critically. "Maybe I can't go as far as you think."

Hagan nodded. "A man has only one hide. It is valuable to him, and not worth a damn to anyone else."

"That's why this Corlett business is crazy. You two aren't buddies, you don't know the man except coming over on the boat and fooling around Bushire awhile with him and a bunch of other Americans. This good fellow stuff, what the hell is it? How far do you got to go for a guy that has to take a trip through Turkey? What they got there, only some Turks? We got a kind of Turk all around us now, and it is not fun at all."

"It's a matter of principle."

"That's manure."

"Your old man used to shoot tax collectors as a matter of principle."

"That was for fun and for saving money."

"Someone—that Kemal—either killed Corlett or has him bottled up to keep us from working. The Russians are behind the eight ball in Azerbaijan, but they never know they're beaten. They're working overtime. Whether Faraj'ullah is using Irani money, or whether he is a front for American money to develop this piece of country without breaking that treaty, I don't know and don't give a damn. The treaty is a piece of Russian hijacking and the Irani had to like it at the time. All I can do is get Corlett free if he's still alive, and that is what I am doing."

"If I give you a hand."

"If you don't want to give it, you can shove it. Man to man, how do we stand?"

The long-faced mountaineer grinned. "We talk the same language. I'm a damned fool, but here's the hand. Shake on it. What do I do?"

Hagan explained how he had to pit Yunus against Kemal. That settled, they went up, and then down a flight, into the sitting room. It was crowded with men who waited for Yunus and bread cakes and tea, cheese and fruit which would not be served until the chief arrived.

Mustafa was there. With the others, he returned the salutations which Ayyub and Hagan offered. None was sufficiently orthodox to decline *salaam* of an infidel.

Presently, Kemal came in alone. He stopped, looked for Hagan, and made straight for him. That clouded eye gave him an evil expression, though his sharp face helped. He sat down and said in English, "You're going with me when I leave."

"Yunus gave me protection, and he can't back down."

Kemal smiled unpleasantly. "He has not yet heard how easy it is to change his mind."

"You have two men with you. I have one. You open your mouth about having Yunus turn me over to you, and I'll give you a deal you won't like. And can't turn down."

Ayyub grunted, and gave the man a throat-cutting appraisal. Kemal saw, understood, but did not mind. He asked Hagan, "Do you mind telling me now, or must it be a surprise?"

Hagan grinned amiably. "I'll tell Yunus to arm me and Ayyub and let us tangle with you three. You won't like it, but you'll look like a fool if you try to squirm out. Whatever hold you've got on Yunus, you lose when you go yellow."

Kemal, as Hagan had expected, was not alarmed. "You'll be glad to go with me," he retorted. "Corlett is alive and comfortable enough, but he won't be if you make trouble here or on the way to where he is. How does that appeal to you?"

Hagan forced himself to go long-faced; actually, the preliminary needling had done better than he had hoped. In snapping at the chance to show that he held the aces, Kemal had put the spotlight on what seemed to have been a false move: that of demanding that Yunus surrender his "protected" when there was a sure way of making Hagan leave voluntarily.

And surely there had been pressure on Yunus, the previous night, else he would not have come to persuade Hagan of the beauties of departure. Why the needless and offensive pressure on a man whose good will was valuable as Yunus'?

Hagan said to Kemal, "Why should I put my neck on the block?"

"You'll be in no danger. You'll both be released when this oil exploration is sabotaged. After your trouble with

Khudayar Khan, you won't be able to work with his uncle."

"Then why bother with me and Corlett?"

"Your disappearance for awhile will cause the governor a great deal of official embarrassment. Your disappearance will get great publicity. In your own country."

"The hell it will! What do I amount to at home?"

"Nothing," Kemal blandly admitted. "But we'll see that you become news. News is news to your press and your radio. They don't know, or they don't care whose purprose it serves, news must be released at all cost."

"I begin to understand," Hagan said, and truthfully. "But once I've been news, once Corlett has been news, and maybe even stepped to the mike to say, we are well and happy, please send us chewing gum, it is a cinch we'll not be turned loose to go home and tell the truth."

Kemal chuckled. "Don't be a fool! Once you are no longer news, nobody would listen to you, no matter what you said. Good God, man! Your public had warning after warning there'd be war, and got tired of it, and wouldn't listen. We can afford to deal fairly. All we want is to discredit the Irani government, show that Azerbaijan is misgoverned, that American and British imperialists cannot afford to exploit Azerbaijan. Not because a pair of Americans are detained, but because the entire province is disorderly and unstable."

He paused, leaned closer, and whispered, "I have told you only your small part. Azerbaijan will become more and more unstable. Within the year there will be border incidents, and war."

KEMAL meant what he said. Where Kemal had been sparring and fencing, he now believed precisely what he said. Eyes and face and voice betrayed his sincerity. The man radiated a will and force which Hagan could not throw aside. All he could say was, "Here comes Yunus, and when we've eaten, tell him he has to throw us out. By then I'll know what I think about it all."

Kemal got up. "You will be well treated, and released in a few months. You can believe me because I have nothing to gain by trickery. So think while you eat."

He turned and went to accost Yunus.

Hagan said to Ayyup, "We're in his hair, and plenty. Yunus wants Russian guns and stuff. He'll get in bad with his people for doing anything to cut them off. And, he doesn't want to sell his 'protected' down the river."

Ayyub drew a deep breath, fingered the keen edge of his dagger, and looked wistfully at Kemal's back. At six hundred yards, the width of Kemal would be a tiny streak of darkness on the breadth of a front sight. . .

Then bread and cheese, fruit and tea were carried into the room on brass trays.

They ate; and they had scarcely said, "Praise Allah!" when Kemal demanded attention and got it. If his abruptness had not succeeded, his studied insolence would have.

"This is today," he declaimed, "and I claim the surrender of the infidel you denied last night."

Yunus, after the custom of his people, did not immediately answer, abruptness being ill-bred. Kemal made the most of the chance by going on, "Protected or no, he is my prisoner by agreement. He came into your land to look for oil, and you had no right to give protection."

Ayyub translated for Hagan, who said, "The old man knows he's hooked. Bad if he keeps us, bad if he kicks us out. Let's go!"

But Ayyub caught his arm. "No, wait! Watch Yunus."

Yunus got up. "O Man! Whom I protect, I protect, and may God do as much to me, and more also, if I give him up."

He had taken the lesser evil of robbing his followers of Russian benefits; and for this they would hold him responsible when the pinch came. They would leave him to look for a chief who could provide. Just as they would have left him had he proved himself a chief whose protection was not good to the uttermost. Then, while Hagan was wondering how Yunus would use the cunning which had kept him in power so long, Ayyub's grasp eased off, and he whispered, "Now!"

Hagan bounced up. Ayyub followed.

Hagan said in Persian, with Ayyub repeating in Azerbaijani, *"Ya khan!* We ask your permission to leave. It will not be good for us if we are here when the

governor comes to do what is to be done. Allah is the best refuge! Tell the governor to eat dung—we have gone into Kurdistan, and the peace upon him."

The hundred wrinkles smiled, and so did the shrewd little eyes. "You have promised me a promise," he said, "and I have promised you a promise. Go with the blessing of Allah, and His mercy!"

Kemal turned to Hagan and said, "You were smart. He was saving face, but he would have got rid of you soon enough. Ride out first, toward that mountain with an *X*-shaped snow patch. Ride slowly, because you'll meet trouble if you get too far ahead of me."

Hagan and Ayyub bowed to Yunus, who sent his major-domo with them to get their horses and their guns. On the way out of the reception room, they looked on both sides for Mustafa, but did not see him.

As they rode down from the *robat* to head for the snow-blazed peak, Hagan said, "Kemal knows we won't use our guns, but when's he going to take them away from us?"

"Pretty soon. In time to show Yunus' men that we're not free. They'll know he tried to save his face only he couldn't. That white-eyed monkey is going to win yet. Making a fool of Yunus."

"But the old man looked too pleased, it wasn't a fake."

Ayyub grunted to dismiss the objection.

Hagan looked back. Three riders were coming from the *robat*. They were too far behind for him to be sure that Kemal led them.

Kemal's game was becoming clear: he wanted Yunus undermined in order to break up the feudal system of the region. He wanted leaderless tribesmen to look for and get a chief who could sell them the Russian brand of "democracy." This was plain to Hagan, though Yunus, whatever he thought of the business, was too close to the plan to have a broad view. Yunus had been sold in terms of racial prejudice, Turco-Tatar against Irani, and so was blinded to the major issue, that of disposing of a feudal chieftain and putting the Communist religion in place of his personal leadership. He could not know his danger; he thought in the old-fashioned terms of one leader against another.

Hagan, looking at the limestone mountains, said to Ayyub, "If we come back from there, we'll have something he can understand."

"What do you mean, something he can understand?"

"The how-come of those propaganda broadcasts. Ten to one, they're canned. Transcriptions."

Hagan had no chance to elaborate. The three behind him were catching up. Ayyub said, "When we get over the next hump, they can't see us get off the horse, and it's like shooting fish in a barrel, one-two-three."

"Give me that gun! Or get the hell out and ride your own way."

Ayyub grimaced, then said, cheerily, "O.K., we shook on it, but it'd be sweet, drilling that louse."

"I'll shake on the idea," Hagan said. "And we may have our chance—when we get Corlett."

CHAPTER IX

AMBUSH

KEMAL and his two riders overtook Hagan some hours after a ridge cut off all sight of Yunus' *robat*. "Hakkiari Kurds," Ayyub said, as the trio came into sight. "From the Turkish side."

"You don't seem glad to see fellow Kurds," Hagan observed.

Ayyub, a Mukri Kurd from near Sauj Bulaq, explained that the Hakkiari were dog-lovers, and in a sense which not even an American dog lover would consider a compliment.

The exchange of salutation was entirely civil. Kemal said, placidly, "That was a nice grandstand play you made. The best Chamber of Commerce tradition, buttering Yunus. But no great harm done. Do you mind if we take Ayyub's rifle?"

"Help yourself, we're prisoners."

Ayyub turned over the Springfield, and said, quietly, "Some day I'd like to get you and those two fellows alone. I'd show you some tricks."

Kemal smiled. "Count me out, they'd keep you busy." Then to Hagan, "I might as well take your pistol. The one you're keeping out of sight."

"Here you go. A fellow gets absent-

As the Hakkiari reached for his gun, Ayyub leveled Kemal's rifle and fired once.

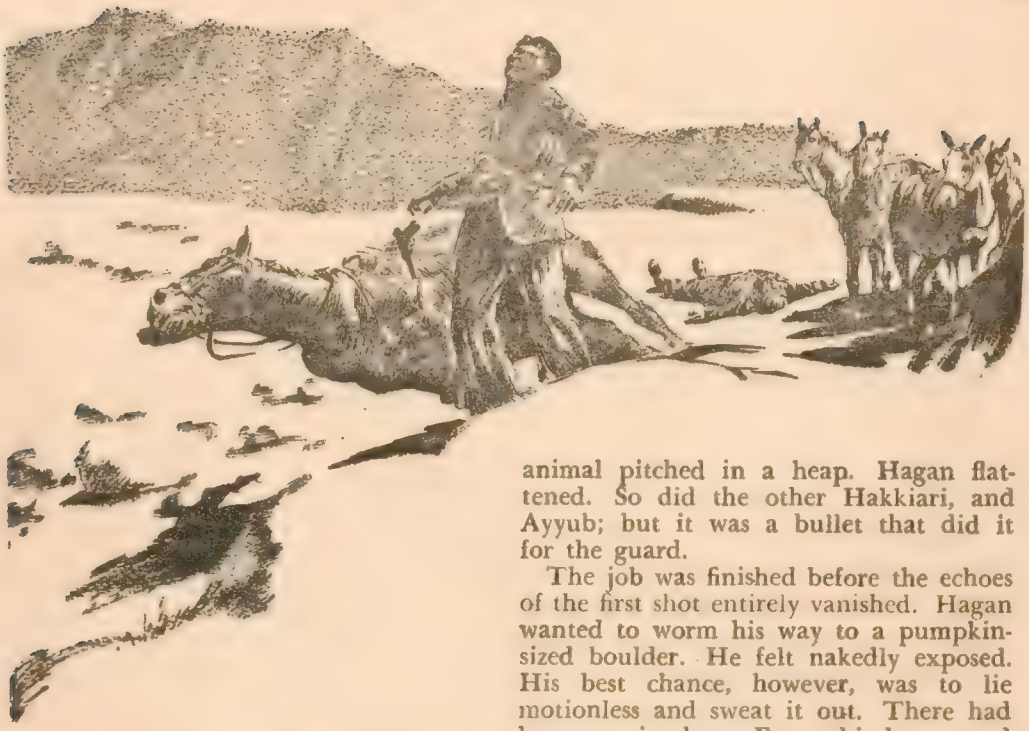
minded. What are you so squeamish about? With Corlett's neck on the block, I've pretty nearly got to be nice."

"I'd look funny riding in with armed prisoners, wouldn't I?"

Hagan agreed that a man had to keep up appearances.

The trail became narrower, and rocky as they put Yunus' territory behind them; the Zagros loomed up, though the X-shaped snow patch became no larger. This was a path for raiders, not for caravans. Finally, snaking along a hog-back of limestone and sandstone, Hagan looked back and could see the *robat* they had left that morning. Ahead, the sun was settling into a notch. He could no longer distinguish details ahead of him, as the glare lashed his eyes. He saw only shadow bulks, and slanting streaks of ruddy light, and the carnelian glow of rock that reflected the beams.

The trail cut back for a north to south reach. Hagan shivered in each shaded stretch, and found warmth only in the full light of the sun. The thin air made



him light headed; he knew that he had the answers to all his problems, though no details were apparent. This did not dampen his optimism.

Finally the trail opened into a great shelf raked by an eye-level sun. Kemal became a black blot ahead. He signaled a halt. Somewhere, water rushed. In a few minutes, dusk would race across the plateau. Darkness and cold would follow. It was time to make camp. Even had it not been, the horses would have needed rest.

The men behind the prisoners fanned out, and dismounted. Hagan looked back, wondering if he could still spot Yunus' stronghold.

A thud and a grunt, the last almost explosive in its force, made him jerk about. Ayyub exclaimed. Metal clattered on the rocks. A horse bolted. Hagan saw Kemal rolling and clawing.

A rifle whacked. The blast came out of the blinding sun; the target had been spotlighted for perfect sniping.

There was no cover for a hundred yards. One of the Hakkiari, quick witted, tried to ride for shelter, using his horse as protection. Three bounds, and the animal pitched in a heap. Hagan flattened. So did the other Hakkiari, and Ayyub; but it was a bullet that did it for the guard.

The job was finished before the echoes of the first shot entirely vanished. Hagan wanted to worm his way to a pumpkin-sized boulder. He felt nakedly exposed. His best chance, however, was to lie motionless and sweat it out. There had been no ricochets. From this he guessed that the sniper had fired from nearly ground level, and so for all his advantage of spotlighting, could perhaps not see a target spread flat.

Kemal groaned and coughed. The Hakkiari, nailed dead center, made not a sound. The wounded horse tried to get up but could not. The other animals had stopped, well away from the approach to the shelf. Then, some distance ahead, rocks clattered. There was a yell, and a volley which must have been fired straight up, as no bullets zinged from slope or ledge.

"Hold it, you chump!" Hagan cried. "That's bait to get us on our feet."

Ayyub snorted, and made for Kemal.

Hagan heard a scrambling at his left. The Hakkiari, who had apparently been no more than stunned by his fall, bounced up from behind his dying horse.

Ayyub moved fast. As the Hakkiari reached for his gun, Ayyub leveled Kemal's rifle and fired once. He didn't even bother to note whether his target dropped. He drew and let out a deep breath and said, contentedly, "I told that bastard."

Then, as an afterthought, and so much in love with perfection that he could not

have heard, much less heeded Hagan's protest, he walked over to give the fallen tribesman a slug through the head.

"You mean," Hagan demanded, "he thought we had something to do with the ambush, and figured he had to get us before we got him?"

"Sure. And we did."

"Huh?"

"Our fault, ain't it? Kemal got snotty with Yunus, and Yunus can't do a thing, it don't look right, shooting a fellow in your own dining room. You did the big-hearted Charlie stuff, and that made it final. Yunus had to do the right thing."

Hagan figured that Emily Post had something to learn on etiquette; but one detail did stick in his craw. "Kemal had a three day safe conduct, he ate the man's grub. How can Yunus pull a trick like this, no matter how sore he was?"

AYYUB grinned and wagged his index finger triumphantly. "That's what Kemal counted on. But Yunus had a couple of visiting firemen, I saw them myself at the house. He maybe didn't *ask* them right out, but if they liked him, they'd put two and two together. It ain't Yunus, it ain't any of his men that done it. But now Yunus can look people in the eye again and tell them that when he protects a man, that man is protected."

"This politeness business has put us out on a limb," Hagan groaned.

"The old guy *had* to do it. He is a gentleman. How'd he feel if there hadn't been a couple or three fellows that liked him and took a hint?"

Hagan's hands were becoming slate colored from the chilly wind which whined across the plateau. He shivered, and drew his sheepskin jacket closer. Then he said, "We'll make it anyway, if we don't freeze. You tend to the horses, while I see if I can doctor Kemal. He may pull through."

Kemal, Hagan quickly realized, could hardly live till he was carried to his headquarters. He said, with difficulty, "Do not bother. There is no use trying to carry me."

"We can try."

"Where get wood for a litter?"

"Might do without wood."

But Kemal ignored this. His fingers plucked clumsily at his jacket. The bullet had drilled him clean, without keyholing or mushrooming. He had not bled very much externally. Hagan had seen men survive with worse wounds, and after treatment longer delayed.

"Wait—let me—"

"I have a pencil." Kemal fumbled. "Write—"

Hagan reached into the jacket and got the things. Kemal asked, "You are going on?"

"I have to."

"You have to. Yes. But let me make sure they do not blame you—for this."

Hagan told Ayyub to bring a saddle. They propped Kemal up so he could write. Wooden-fingered, he struggled with the pencil. "Give this to Dmitri—he will—understand—and believe." He forced a smile. "You see—I keep my promise—for your safety—he will believe."

It was now dark. Kemal would not let Hagan try to dress the wound. The man began to mutter. He let out a wild yell, struggled for a moment, and went limp.

"Shock, heart, and altitude," Hagan said, as he picked up notebook and pencil.

Ayyub did find some bits of brush, and managed to make tea.

"You using that note?"

Hagan shook his head. "Hell, no. I've got ideas of my own. But it'll be tough going, unless we find wood somewhere."

"What for?"

"Make a litter two horses can carry. Kemal's going to come in handier than he figured."

"Set him on a horse before he gets too stiff."

"Not as good as a litter for what I want. Aren't there any trees in these mountains?"

"Scrubby ones ahead. I saw them before dark."

"They'll do. And turn the extra horses loose."

"What for?"

"They'll go home ahead of us and give us a buildup. With us walking, and two nags carrying a litter, we'll look just right. We're crashing the gate, instead of going up to surrender."

Ayyub liked that idea. He improved it by suggesting, "You put on that Hakkiari's turban and things. That'll make it better."

Hagan agreed, and added, "We'll let

only one horse loose. Take turns riding till we're ready to stage our act."

Hagan and Ayyub purposely dawdled along the trail, so that it was not until dusk of the following day that they came within sight of a small *robat* from whose watch tower an antenna slanted down to the flat roof. The Kurd rode. Hagan, wearing a dead man's turban and baggy trousers, plodded along, leading two horses hitched in tandem, with the litter between them.

A horse whinnied. Ayyub's mount answered. Since there had been neither challenge nor sniping, it was almost certain that the one mount turned loose had found his way home, giving advance hint of disaster. Ayyub's rifle rode with the corpse. There were pistols for both.

Wind whined through the pass. Cold and weariness made Hagan doubt his plan. He wondered if his wooden fingers could grab a Luger without fumbling.

Light flared from a window slit. The enemy spotted them. A wooden bolt thumped. A hinge wailed as Ayyub hailed the house. The opening door spread a changing pattern of yellow against the slate gray dusk. This was the best time for surprise, since the men of the *robat* had not yet put on the wariness of night.

Hagan guessed that Ayyub got his answer in Kurdish. Ayyub dismounted with feigned stiffness. His horse, released, went ahead of him, blocking the dim light. Question and answer, neither of which he could understand, made Hagan tighten with anxiety and apprehension: but the men in the *robat* did not come out to help with the litter.

Ayyub gestured. Hagan led the team.

Time had become a succession of pictures; it was no longer a continuity. During this decisive second, the illusion presented to the men of the *robat* must have been as Hagan had intended it: after disaster in which all but Kemal had been killed or scattered, two strangers had appeared and offered to help the wounded survivor. This was a story concerning whose background the benevolent strangers could scarcely know anything; they had nothing to explain.

Then Hagan knew that time had jerked another picture into view. He was inside the *robat*, in warmer air, scented by horses, and by the savor of meat broiling in an inner room. Being a white man, he looked like a Kurd. Nothing to it. They were making for the litter. They had gulped the story.

The door closed. The bolt thumped home. A pair of Turco-Tatars and a bullet-headed man, big and broad, deep-chested and thick-necked, faced the good Samaritans.

"Dmitri?" Ayyub asked.

Hagan, not understanding the reply, caught a repetition of the name; an affirmative, followed by a query. This was the man for whom he had a written message. Ayyub said, "Give Dmitri the letter."

HAGAN dug into his jacket. From the corner of his eye, he saw how Ayyub sagged and slouched as from exhaustion. His long face was somber as the droop of his mustaches. But he was sufficiently alive to scratch his lice. He'd quit scratching in time.

Hagan surprised Dmitri with a Luger instead of a letter. The gray-green eyes, Tatar shaped, showed that surprise was total. And Ayyub snapped a word to point the simultaneous appearance of his pistol.

Dmitri recovered enough to raise his hands and ask a question which Hagan could not understand. Ayyub answered it, and then Dmitri understood all that he needed to know. He said in curious, lip-formed English, "You are the prisoner."

Hagan said, "Call it that. Bring Corlett. Send one man. No matter who raises a hand against us, you two are finished."

"Then what?"

"No matter what then. Do as you are told or you are finished where you stand. Is that clear?"

"That is understood."

"Do it."

Dmitri knew that the first quaver would get him a clip of Luger slugs in the belly. He knew that the only parley would be in lead. He spoke to the younger of the two Azerbaijanis.

Hagan said, "Wait!" Then, to Ayyub, "Was that order good?"

"The man said, bring Corlett."

"O.K."

From now on, it would be simple. Once Corlett took a pistol, they had only to slug the three front men, load Dmitri into the litter as a hostage, and get out. Might

be time and chance for a search of the radio department. See how many men Dmitri had. Corlett would know; there'd be no hideouts for a surprise counter-attack.

"How did you do it?" Dmitri asked.

"Yunus Manioglu did it. Shut up."

"But you might tell—"

Hagan did not speak. However, his face must have changed, for Dmitri swallowed the half spoken question. Hagan knew from old times how much trouble one can get by being baited into needless talk with a prisoner who has nothing more to lose and everything to gain. Shoot him down, slug him, but do not talk to him unless *you* want to know something.

The horses and the dead man were doing nicely. The heavy door, bolted from within, was a comfortable background. Ayyub's gun play on the plateau made him a comfortable companion. All this helped offset the competent and unpleasant men Hagan had in front of him, and elsewhere in the *robat*. Until you have destroyed the enemy, you have not won a thing.

Then Corlett came in, unbound and smiling. He had a sensitive face, with eager guileless eyes. A lean, loose-jointed man of more than medium height, though not as tall as Ayyub. He hadn't had a hard time in captivity. There must have been much to occupy his restless mind, many ideas for it to play with; and beauty of a sort in these desolate limestone mountains.

"Long time no see," he said, happily. "They told me you'd be hauled up here for cold storage and indoctrination, and here you are, taking over."

He stepped forward. "Hold it, Hank!" Hagan warned. "We're hanging on two trigger fingers, keep clear in case I have to hose these fellows. How many of them are there?"

Corlett chuckled. "Just these three. What happened to Kemal?"

"He hurt Yunus' feelings, and Yunus sent friends to bushwhack him. Instead of running, we kept on. Tried to get Kemal home for doctoring, but he was still useful anyway."

"What'll we do with these chaps?" Corlett asked.

"With only three, we can take time to eat and rest."

"You need it," Corlett said, sympathetically. "I've been learning to make good *shashlik,* smell it back there?"

"Man, man! Any place we can lock them up?"

Corlett shook his head. "But there is some wire, a lot of it, in the radio room."

He went to get wire to secure the three captives. When this chore was finished, Hagan put up his pistol and went into the inner room of the *robat* to eat. Ayyub refused to go with him.

"I'll watch these fellows and eat here."

It was good to sit down and tie into a skewer of grilled mutton cubes. A few hookers of brandy gave Hagan the lift he needed. Corlett began to tell how he had been nailed on the detour from the regular road between Saray and Khoi. Between talking, and skewering more mutton, and pouring more brandy, the instrument man was very busy—and so was Hagan.

"Just a second, I'll take Ayyub some more," he said, lifting the *shashlik* from the charcoal brazier. "Is he modern enough to take a hooker of brandy?"

"Not if you say it's brandy. But call it panther milk, and he'll drink anything."

Corlett hurried to the stable where Ayyub mocked his captives. Food and liquor, however, silenced the Kurd. Hagan, drawing a deep breath, wondered when he'd fall apart, now that the tension was over. This was juicy. This was—

Horse bouquet and cold air fanned him. "Shut that door," he said, "and let's have another."

"Good idea," Corlett agreed.

Hagan hitched about. What he faced was too sudden, and too unbelievable for comment, so he said nothing. He had to be sure it had actually happened.

Dmitri smiled at him from behind a burp-gun. Corlett and the other two didn't consider arms necessary. Corlett said, "I don't want to leave, and you won't want to, after I've talked to you. It's so much better for the cause that you and I disappear."

"You're crazy!"

"No, Walt, I am not crazy. You are crazy for thinking that capitalism and A-bombs are going to blow civilization out of existence."

"Where's Ayyub?"

"Alive, unconscious, and looking for-

ward to a slight headache. I just clipped him with a gun barrel, you can't hurt a Kurd. Dmitri'll put up his gun as soon as we make sure you won't run amuck and do a lot of damage."

Once they took his pistol, they sat down to eat and drink with him. "No hard feelings," Dmitri said in his peculiar lisp-and-lip enunciation. "This is purely business. We have our business, you have yours. First we won, then you won, now we win again."

Good guys, because they outnumbered him. But presently, they'd want to know more about Kemal's death. He'd better have a good story. Thinking on this, Hagan found the *shashlik* no longer juicy, but dry and hard to swallow.

CHAPTER X

FOOD AND PROPAGANDA

ALTHOUGH the *robat* had neither iron bars nor any other features of a prison, it did well enough. Its roof was of slender poles laid across beams, and covered with clay. A chain and old-fashioned padlock secured the door, which was of heavy planks. Three slits, quite narrow, pierced the thick wall of stone and clay. Given a sturdy dagger, it would be easy to cut one's way out.

Corlett brought the prisoners rice and cheese, bread and dried apricots. For dessert, he dished out propaganda. Since he came only when the other three were in the room at the foot of the stairway, there was no use slugging him. Getting past them, and into the ground level stable, to mount up and ride, would be impossible.

"No use being pig-headed, Walt," Corlett held forth. "If you'd studied Marx instead of comics, you'd know that there must be class warfare. Imperialism is finished. Capitalism has come to the end of its orgy of exploitation of the worker."

Hagan snorted. "And the so-called worker is trying his damndest to do some exploiting. That's O.K. for the *moujiks* or whatever you call the Red Joe Doakes, and if it's helped him, I am not kicking. Maybe the guy never did have a chance under the Czar, and maybe he did have reasons for going hog wild. But I am talking about the States, where anyone with sense enough to pour sand out of a boot can make a better living right now than any Russian will be making in the next fifty years at the rate they've been going. If their system is so good, how come they couldn't make their own war equipment after twenty-five years with the proletariat in the saddle?"

This should have stopped Corlett, but when Ayyub demanded, "You got us locked up, what do we have to listen to that crap for?" Corlett went into some more dialectic. He actually believed everything he said. He had the glow of an evangelist, the fervor of a prophet. Not content with his own belief, the poor chap was unhappy in meeting anyone who did not share his enthusiasm.

Hagan at last asked, wearily, "When do we get out of here? I came here to give you a break. I could have got away hands down, when Kemal got shot up, but I was a plain sucker. You've gummed things enough already to throw a wrench into imperialistic expansion."

"Well, I'll tell you. Dmitri promised that you can go with me."

"That's what I was getting at. When?"

"When the caravan we're expecting is ready to return."

"What caravan?"

"Why, the one bringing supplies from Russia. Once we're in Russian Azerbaijan, and you can see for yourself how much better off the people are, the very same people as the Iranian government's exploiting."

"You're as crazy as a hoot owl! They'd never let any amateur Red into that part of the country. The U.S. ambassador couldn't get into Russian Azerbaijan if he begged with tears in his eyes."

"They promised me," Corlett declared, stubbornly. "And I talked him into letting you go, too. You see, sending my camera into Khoi was only a minor detail of a plan to dramatize the protest against exploitation. But when you got as far as Yunus Manioglu's *robat*, I saw how much better it'd be if you joined me. You don't seem to realize what a rare chance this is."

"So rare I'm locked up to make sure I won't back out."

But that didn't make Corlett skip a beat. "The bourgeoisie mind," he parroted grandly, "is so obtuse that one has

to guide it for awhile. The bourgeoisie do not realize that—"

"Being locked up," Hagan cut in, "is bad enough without ideology. I've been shivering till my teeth strike sparks. How about a dividend of charcoal? I'm producing according to my ability, it is up to you to supply me according to my need."

Corlett missed the irony entirely. "We are running awfully low, but wait till the caravan comes in," he promised, as he picked up the tray and made for the door.

Ayyub, unworried by captivity, had not once reminded Hagan that from the very start he had called it a fool's errand to set out in search of a missing man. His first display of interest came when he asked, "You figure that kicking about how cold it is will maybe get them to lock us up closer to the horses?"

Hagan shrugged. "I don't exactly know, but charcoal might come in handy."

Ayyub got up and studied the slack in the loop of chain which passed through a hole in the door, and through another, drilled through the wall, beyond the jamb. "Heat the chain often enough, you burn through and the door opens. But they smell smoke."

"Depends on the wind," Hagan pointed out. "Steam from our rice was sucked to the window. Next time he comes to preach, let's act interested."

"He don't come in only when the other fellows are watching."

"Keep him happy. He'll do things for us."

Hagan went to the window slits. Some of the mud bricks were loose, but even if one could worm through, escape would be impossible without a hundred or more feet of rope, since the rock foundation of the *robat* fell away sharply.

THE following day, a train of pack animals came filing down to the shelf. Judging from the shapes of the cases which the donkeys carried, rifles and cartridges had arrived from the north. However, some of the hampers contained charcoal and rations. Looking through another slit, Hagan noted that groups of Kurds were riding toward the *robat*. It looked as though they had been waiting for the pack train.

Later, when the mountaineers left, they were festooned with bandoliers. All now had rifles. Some drove pack animals loaded with coffin-shaped cases of arms. Whether or not the tribesmen had taken along a cargo of Communist doctrine, they could be depended upon to make trouble for the government, or for their neighbors; or, most likely, for both.

When he saw that some were leaving with radio sets similar to the one Yunus had in his *robat*, Hagan reasoned that Dmitri was enlarging his circle of influence. At first it seemed a curious business, antagonizing Yunus, and making friends with the Kurds. Then, thinking it over, Hagan recognized two answers: first, the solemn nonsense whereby an "ideological Red" can prove that black is white; second, the actual one, promoting disorders until the legitimate authorities were thoroughly discredited.

After several more meals, Hagan was convinced that Corlett actually expected to go to Russia. At first, this seemed beyond the credulity of even the most gullible "fellow traveler" from the States; but Ayyub, though he could not imagine why anyone could be silly enough to wish to go into Soviet territory, suggested how Corlett had been made to believe that he could penetrate the iron curtain.

"They tell him," the Kurd explained, "how it is important to make the survey snafu. All right, important doing, it rates important pay. Corlett is a damn fool, he don't like money, he don't like women, he don't like nothing where he likes at home, so they tell him, you get a free ticket to Russia. For that, he does dirt to his friend."

"You got something there. But will they take him?"

Ayyub pulled a long face. Instead of answering, he caught his own chin, as though plucking a man by the beard. With his right hand, he made a cutting stroke.

Hagan grimaced. "If that's what he'll get, what do *we* get?"

"What is good for a fool's friend?"

"Neat answer. But when?"

"When it gets them something," Ayyub answered.

This bit of Asiatic realism gave Hagan's imagination something solid to work on. The murder of two geologists would cer-

tainly discredit the provincial government much more effectively than would their mysterious disappearance.

When the next ration of food and propaganda was issued, Hagan toned down his resentment and grudgingly admitted interest in the new paradise which was given at bayonet's point to whoever was underprivileged and unarmed. Corlett glowed with a missionary's exultation at the sight of a pagan about to receive the light.

"The oil in Azerbaijan," he chanted, "belongs to the Workers. It should be nationalized."

"Yeah, for Russians," was what Hagan thought, but kept well behind his teeth; instead, he asked, "How do you four fellows expect to do it with transcribed propaganda about what's going on in Cairo and Damascus and Peshawar?"

Corlett smiled craftily. "I asked the very same thing. Those reports of rioting and street fighting entertain the Azerbaijani and the Kurd. It gets them in the habit of listening. In that way, we are sure of a large audience when the time comes for concerted action."

"Taking over the government again?"

"That, or other important moves. Walt, this is big, this is pioneering in the liberation of humanity. And don't get the idea that because there is so much anti-American propaganda on the air, we hate the American worker. We're trying to liberate him, too."

Hagan swallowed that, and flashed Ayyub a warning glance. "Freezing in this attic is no fun. If Dmitri really means what he says, he ought to treat us the way he does you."

"I told him I was making progress indoctrinating you," Corlett said, "but he's suspicious of the bourgeoisie mind. And we didn't get as much charcoal as we expected."

"So we don't get a *kursi*?"

"I'll speak to him again."

"Well, if he's short of charcoal, how about letting us come down and eat where it's warm? Hell's hinges, two of us couldn't gang up on four of you."

Corlett picked up the tray and promised to do his best.

That evening, the prisoners were allowed to eat with their captors. Dmitri was smooth and pleasant and cryptic. He didn't know when his guests would head for the border. The smuggler's route was somewhat different, in many respects, from a boulevard.

His two henchmen squatted with their backs to the door which opened into the stables. They had their burp guns at hand as they ate. Dmitri, after glancing at his watch, stepped to a door at the far end of the room. Hagan got a glimpse of a radio transmitter. As he had suspected, there was a record player to put transcriptions on the air. This time, something other than canned sermons was to go out.

The converter whined. Dmitri spoke into the mike. Hagan couldn't get it. Ayyub looked blank. That eliminated Persian, Kurdish, or Azerbaijani; purely as a guess, Hagan decided that it was Russian. There was an answer in the same language.

Another question, and an answer. As the routine was repeated, Hagan got the impression that Dmitri was calling a succession of stations, getting a report from each. Finally, there came an answer in Persian: "Harkening and obedience. We will meet them at sunrise."

DMITRI turned the knob to set the transmitter to another wave length, and switched on the record player. That done, he came out to drink tea.

"Conditions are favorable," he said to Hagan. "Comrade Corlett has convinced me that you should go with him."

"It's a chance not many people have. Do you think I'll be able to find work in my line?"

Dmitri gave him a look of condescension. "It is almost impossible for people to avoid work. There is no unemployment, never. An engineer, a technician, he gets a double ration."

"Of work?"

"No. Of food. And extra privileges. Extra pay also. He is permitted to invest it in government bonds."

"To prevent inflation?"

"There is no inflation in our economy."

"Please explain that," Hagan said, with unfeigned interest.

Dmitri had an explanation which neatly evaded the fact that in the economy which he boosted, there was nothing avail-

able for purchase, except bonds; that along with the vices of capitalism, they had also eliminated the virtues. But Hagan listened, and made everyone happy, including himself. The more they concentrated on dialectic, the less they'd hamper him when he made his first move. And the first attempt had to succeed, for when these people laid aside their doctrines and reached for side arms, they were very efficient.

Ayyub nodded, and began to snore.

Hagan leaned forward, listening to Dmitri, and to the propaganda which the record player pumped into the mike. When the run was over, Dmitri quit lecturing long enough to call all stations. As before, the final question and answer were in Persian.

The few words Hagan got were enough to tell him that an ambush was being prepared for a detachment of troops making for the mountains. The rifles issued tribesmen were about to be initiated.

Corlett did not know that Hagan understood Persian. Hagan had never mentioned the fact because all that a man gains by an uncommon or unnecessary accomplishment is a reputation for eccentricity. During their association in the south, there had been no occasion for revealing his knowledge.

When Hagan went back to his cell, Ayyub followed with *kursi* and a basket of charcoal.

"We've got to make it tonight."

"What's the rush?" Ayyub asked.

Hagan said, "While you were doping, Dmitri called other stations, one in Persian. Probably walkie-talkies. I didn't get much, but it sounded as though Faraj'ullah had sent some troops out to look around. Maybe Yunus got sore. Maybe Khudayar is going to find us, hell or high-water."

"How'd they know where to look for us?"

"Mustafa might have gone to Khoi and talked to the governor. Maybe to get Faraj'ullah's troops into a jam, and get even with him. Maybe to set him on our track, and so get in good with him. Lord alone knows why, but Mustafa could have got in touch with Khudayar and his uncle when he left Yunus' place."

"That's a lot of guesswork."

"Sure it is. Maybe it is just a number of raids by mountaineers to keep things in an uproar. Could be a move to shellac Yunus for having Kemal bushwhacked. But whatever it is, you can bet it is not aimed to make peace in Azerbaijan, or make it easier to drill for oil. Whenever these Reds start moving, it is to get something good for themselves. Which is another way of saying, bad for everyone else."

"Can't hurt you or me," the practical Kurd objected.

"You were telling me about the throat-cutting we may be in line for."

"Sure, but now they are busy with something big."

"And just the kind of thing that'd be all the fancier for having us feeding the buzzards."

Ayyub had no more argument. Hagan went on, "Fire up, and stuff shirts into the windows."

"You'll smother."

"I won't, and you won't," Hagan corrected. "Let's get busy, and start the gas attack. I've got it all doped out."

CHAPTER XI

FOUR OF A KIND

THE fumes of burning charcoal made an invisible pool. Being much heavier than air, it collected on the floor, since the blocked window slits kept out the wind which might otherwise have stirred it up. Accumulating, the fumes would finally suffocate sleepers who had overestimated the ventilation.

The coals glowed, for they had not yet exhausted the oxygen in the room. Until they became cold and ash-filmed, they would be making carbon dioxide. Hagan stepped away from the window which supplied him with fresh air, and went toward the door, where he got the pungent odor of the gas, and its acid taste. The first few breaths made his pulse and respiration speed up. His head began to ache; whether from tension, or from the gas which had diffused imperceptibly into his ventilated corner, he did not know. Even when standing erect, well above the invisible layer on the floor, he found the fumes oppressive and dizzying.

Ayyub bounded to the door. He kicked

it. He beat it. He made the chain rattle. After a yell for help, he staggered back to the window, leaving Hagan to continue the kicking and rattling. When dizziness threatened to overcome him, he turned to fight his way back. Ayyub, however, met him midway. "They're coming," the Kurd gasped, and shoved Hagan back toward the door.

Hagan gulped a deep breath. He could not be sure whether the sound he heard was the pounding of feet on the stairs, or the hammering in his ears. Blackness reached for him. He was dimly aware that he clawed the floor. Once down, he could not get up. What he had planned as a fake had become real. A saving breath of cold air kept him from blacking out completely. Ayyub must have cleared another window.

When the door opened, Hagan was still conscious. The worst was over. Corlett

Ayyub bounded to the door. He kicked it. He beat it. He made the chain rattle.

recoiled from the suddenly released flood of gas. It flowed down the stairs to meet Dmitri and the others, who had followed Corlett. The odor of the leakage at the threshold apparently had told them as much as had Ayyub's yelling and pounding.

The Kurd staggered through the doorway. He choked and coughed. He lurched against the wall and thumped to the floor. It was a convincing act, and quite disarming. Ayyub's mumbling sold the idea that Hagan, the silent victim, was dead, or nearly so.

A few breaths of clean air pulled Hagan together. Carbon dioxide no more poisons a man than does water when one drowns in it. Corlett and his comrades made the stairs creak under their weight as they came back. Curiosity, as Hagan had expected, had got them all bunched up.

For a moment, Corlett was in charge. He spoke of artificial respiration. They paused at the threshold to debate whether he should set to work at once, or carry Hagan to the lower floor. Ignoring Corlett's instructions, the three Reds crowded about him and the victim.

That was when Ayyub set to work. He had taken a loosened mud brick from the sill. This, knotted into his shirt, made a useful bludgeon. As it smacked home, Hagan gave Corlett a first class boot. Dmitri, slugged senseless, toppled to the floor. Hagan, though momentarily pinned down by the chief Red's weight, contrived to grab one of the Azerbaijanis about the ankles. Thrown off balance, the man bashed his head against the wall. Hagan wriggled clear, and closed in to settle the issue. He pulled away in time to miss the final swing of Ayyub's blackjack.

"Four of a kind," Hagan gasped, as he straightened up and looked down at the clutter of unconscious captors. "Take that *kursi* out before we lock 'em up, or they'll smother before they snap out of it."

They searched the quartet.

"Not a gun among them. Leave them a knife, so they can cut their way out. What'd I tell you, curiosity did get them off base. Let's go!"

After securing the door, they picked up the *kursi* and made for the ground level to get horses and gear. Hagan said, "Might as well take a burp gun, just for luck. You saddle up while I have a look at the radio room."

The wind-driven battery charger clacked away as Hagan gathered a case of records. This, and the player, were an extra dividend, in which Yunus Manioglu should be interested.

"Stuff these into saddle bags," he said to Ayyub. "They're more important than grub."

"What the hell we want with music?"

"Tell you later. All set to go?"

"Ready to ride."

"Go up and listen to what those monkeys in the bridal suite are doing. Some of 'em may know they're not dead."

"I'll change their minds if they try busting out. What do you want to wait for?"

"That radio interests me."

THE final message which Dmitri had sent had been in Persian. Hagan remembered the station identification. He closed the circuit, heard the set warm up, and then addressed the mike.

"*Khanzadeh calling.* Khanzadeh calling Asp-i-safeed. Calling Asp-i-safeed . . ." He flipped the switch. The loudspeaker gave only static. "White Horse" was asleep; White Horse was on the march; White Horse wasn't listening because his orders had been such that no further instruction could be expected; White Horse would be off the air until he had a report to render. . . .

"Let Asp-i-safeed keep on doping," Ayyub grumbled from the head of the stairs. "These guys are snapping out of it, I didn't hit 'em hard enough. One's parking his lunch—"

"Khanzadeh calling Asp-i-Safeed."

Over.

And then, "Asp-i-Safeed awaiting orders," said a voice in Persian. "Go ahead, Khanzadeh. Over."

"What was the last order received? Read it back."

"I'll read it to Dmitri. Who are you?"

"Corlett. Dmitri left me in charge. I have no copy of the orders."

"Intercept troops advancing on—"

Another voice, commanding and wrathful, blotted out what would have followed. The portable set went off the air. Hagan, learning nothing to amplify his sketchy

picture of the situation, had only succeeded in warning one of the field parties that something was wrong. He stepped out of the radio room, grabbed a burp gun, and turned to hose the set with slugs. Then, sure that Dmitri could not send new orders, Hagan and Ayyub mounted up.

They rode by moonlight from the wind-swept shelf, and toward the plateau where snipers had settled Kemal. Presently they sighted the rolling foothills, far below. They had this view until the trail dipped, and an intervening ridge blocked off the moon, leaving them in darkness.

From time to time they stopped to listen. All they heard was the rush of water, far down in the gorge. Hagan said, "Whatever troops they're going to bushwhack, it'll be between here and the open hills. And it'll be by daylight. If Faraj'ullah has soldiers looking for us, you can bet they'll not be making night marches, not in this country."

Ayyub snorted. "Not in any country, not these Iranis!" Then, sourly, "Quit worrying about the governor's men and start worrying about us."

"That's exactly what I am doing. We better muffle the hoofs, so whoever is waiting for Faraj'ullah's cavalry won't hear us." This job was done with pieces cut from Hagan's sheepskin jacket.

The gorge widened. The moon had sunk behind the Zagros Range. Hagan caught the first smell and the taste of dawn. He could distinguish the rocky spine beyond which were the hills and rolling lands of Yunus' territory; its mass was dark against a sky that became gray in the east.

A treacherous half-visibility began to warp the shapes of jutting rocks and shelves and ravines. It created illusion, and gave a false sense of security. Hagan pulled up and said, "With his radio out of action, we're way ahead of the news. Whatever we meet, we can bluff our way through."

Ayyub sniffed the wind, which had shifted.

"Smoke. Someone around the corner."

Hagan got the acrid tang of a fire fed by cakes of dried manure.

"See who's cooking. If we don't like their faces, get the jump on them, and ride for it. You do the talking."

They took the sheepskin muffling from the horses' hooves. Since stealth could no longer be effective, best avoid the appearance of it. Hagan's mount whined. There was an answer.

Ayyub in the lead, they skirted the dry channel, and rounded a limestone buttress. Not far ahead, two men stood by the small fire, over which they were heating water. Ayyub hailed them, and they answered, "*Marhabba!* Welcome."

They were Kurds. One had a rifle. Both were tall, and in the murky light, little more than shadow masses topped by turbans.

"They want us to stop and eat," Ayyub said.

"Beg off, we can't stall around."

"Might find out what's going on. And if you hurt their feelings, we get a couple slugs in the back."

"This damned Asiatic politeness!"

"Want to shoot it out with them now?"

As between tea and gun play at dawn, Hagan elected the former. They dismounted. Nothing wrong. Just two Kurds in sheepskin jackets, and two horses, not yet saddled. The older of the pair, wrinkled and leathery, addressed Hagan, who said, "I'm a Pathan, I don't speak Kurdish."

They seated themselves about the fire. The Kurds wanted to hear all about Hagan's adopted country.

"It's very much like your own," he said; and then, "Of course we'll be making raids in India, as soon as the British leave."

"Do the Russians give you presents?"

"Not as often as they might," Hagan answered.

THIS wouldn't be so bad: gnaw bread and cheese, gulp three cups of tea, and get going. But that was not what happened. Hagan's travelogue was interrupted by the appearance, without any warning, of half a dozen mountaineers who stepped from behind the upthrust of rock which sheltered the camp. They had their rifles at the ready.

For an instant, Hagan was not sure whether they had materialized out of limestone, or out of shadow-murk. Then they became all too real.

"Who are you?" the wrinkled man de-

manded, throwing off all pretense of hospitality, now that armed men backed him. "Where are you going? Where have you been? What is a Pathan doing here? Whose safe-conduct have you?"

Hagan countered, "Rob us, or let us go in peace. Do what is to be done. You outnumber us, why talk?"

The wrinkled leader smiled, though not amiably. "We are not bandits. Prove you are what you say, then go in peace."

"Where do you carry *your* proof of what you are?"

The man gestured toward his followers. "These are my law. We are looking for two men, and you are two. One a Kurd like ourselves, the other an *Inglesi* dressed like one of us. And riding horses like those you rode."

Bad, and getting worse. Hagan wondered how Ayyub was taking it, and what Ayyub was ready to do, and if anything could be done—but being under fire, he could not shift his glance long enough to get or give reassurance.

"Who looks for two like us?" Hagan demanded.

"Dmitri Barlov. Two locked him up in his *robat*."

"Let me talk to Dmitri, let him decide."

"By Allah, that is what he wants."

It was somewhat too late for speculations as to how Dmitri had carved his way out of his cell, rounded up his strayed horses, and got word to this band of Kurds. Behind the half dozen with their ready rifles were fifteen or twenty others who had left their horses to get a look at the strangers. Too late, Hagan knew that he had barged into a neatly baited trap, where there had been the chance of racing past in half-light which made straight shooting impossible.

The only answer that fitted was that Dmitri had, despite Hagan's supposedly clean sweep of the *robat*, sent out radio messages. Hard riding over shortcuts could not have done the job.

"Clearly," Hagan went on, "you have a radio. Dmitri sent us with a message to Yunus Manioglu. Keeping us here will do you no good. Yunus has men in the foothills. There is a change of plan and we have to get it to him. Let me talk to Dmitri, now. Or it will not go well with you."

"Who are you?"

"How many American followers did Dmitri have?" Hagan took a step toward the fire. He pointed toward the rocky bastion which concealed the camp. "Call Dmitri, and do what he says."

Hagan's voice and gesture were commanding simply because he had more at stake than the other man; it was the difference between being able to outlive an error, and making one which allowed no second chance. The only reason for their having bothered with a trap was that shooting, without challenge or warning, might have settled a pair of travelers who'd never heard of Dmitri. Such an error would cause a blood feud, and likewise, cover the actual fugitives. Sensing that he was making his final free move, Hagan moved well—and the Kurd's glance followed the commanding gesture.

"Let me talk to Dmitri," Hagan repeated, and at the same time, kicked the pot, spilling water into the fire. Steam and ash erupted in an explosive puff which blotted the entire front of the half dozen riflemen, and blinded them. And as he moved, Hagan went for his pistol. He did not need accuracy; he needed volume and speed. He got both. He sprayed bullets into the billowing steam, and into the men behind it. The armed men, drawn by their interest in the parley, had come close together, closer than they should have. This, and surprise, gave Hagan his narrow chance.

Ayyub let out a ferocious yell. With one hand, he held the alarmed horses by the reins; with the other, he poured home a hatful of slugs, kicking up earth, and nicking the cliff. This, a prolongation of Hagan's move, completed the panic.

CHAPTER XII

THE GRANDFATHER OF LIES

HAGAN and Ayyub mounted on the run. During the seconds in which neither could keep up a protecting fire, they were vulnerable as sitting ducks. The enemy, however, needed those vital instants to realize what had happened—and when they got their rifles into action, haste and confusion hampered them, and so did the treacherous light.

Slugs whined and screamed from the

opposite cliffs. Hagan booted his mount from the shelf and into the dry water course. Ayyub, following, likewise gambled on the sure-footedness of his horse. He managed to get the burp gun into line. Only one clip, but it searched the bay in which the party had camped, and had kept the horses. A number of animals stampeded.

Momentarily sheltered by an angle of the ravine, Hagan got back on the trail. Now that panic had passed its peak, the Kurds were getting organized. Apparently a few mounts had been saddled. These hammered down the trail in pursuit. Ayyub shoved in another clip. Hagan yelled, "Save the ammunition!"

"Keep 'em worried!" he yelled, and unraveled another burst.

The rocky walls tapered off. The ravine widened, opened into the low hills of Yunus Manioglu and his people.

At first, Hagan thought that the rattle of gunfire which followed Ayyub's wild shooting was an echo, but when the duration and volume went beyond anything which the limestone corridors of the Zagros could have made, he concluded that what he heard came from another quarter. Ayyub pointed at a nearby slope which took shape in the grayness. The muzzle blasts of many rifles flashed in the shadows.

Splotches of flame blossomed. Concussions jarred the low hog-back which blocked the immediate view on the left. Artillery grumbled, and machine guns chattered, with smaller and smaller intervals between bursts. Then, from the right, came a drumming and pounding. Riders poured out of a draw beyond the one from which Hagan had escaped.

As he reached the anticline for which he and Ayyub had been heading, he gained enough elevation to see what he had already surmised: a considerable body of horse and motorized troops were holding their own against attack from the upper slopes of the mountains. The detachment which passed along the flank of the anticline would, had things gone according to plan, have joined others debouching from ravines to take the government forces from the rear. But something had slipped; apparently the trap had been sprung prematurely.

"Someone jumped the gun," said Hagan, thinking back to the radio orders, and wondering what "White Horse" had done.

Ayyub grinned. "That shooting we started. It got the soldiers on their feet. Maybe got some of Dmitri's fellows worried about missing a signal, and someone fired too soon."

Judging from the shell bursts, and the scattering of tribesmen in the face of counterattack, the ambush had been turned inside out. The raiders, disorganized, fled from their proposed victim.

"You're right," Hagan agreed, after squinting through the smoke and dust for a moment. "Our break might've alerted the troops."

Turning their backs on the border incident, they faced the sunrise to ride to Yunus Manioglu's *robat*. Behind them, the machine guns tapered off to short spurts, widely spaced. The field guns quit rumbling, Finally, the only evidence of combat was thinning dust, and the wheeling of scavengers, black against the sky.

Faraj'ullah Khan might publicize the inverted ambuscade into a decisive battle, the final stroke in pacifying the turbulent tribesmen; again, he might squash the story, and explain it all as military maneuvers in the field. There was no predicting what the Iranian mind would do. Nor was Hagan trying to predict. He was too busy wondering how he had come out of a baited trap with no more than three bullet grazes, and a few cuts made by rock flakes kicked up by the wild shooting.

The saddle bags and their cargo of propaganda escaped damage. This prize, Hagan reasoned, would offset his clash with Khudayar; and what he had learned about Corlett should please Faraj'ullah by relieving the governor of any embarrassment as to the man's disappearance.

AZERBAIJANI horsemen, spying the two riders, came from lookout posts to escort them to the *robat*. Yunus Manioglu received Hagan and Ayyub in the audience room. He was more than pleased that they had not come seeking protection.

"You are back, praise Allah! This is coolness to the eyes. Welcome. How is your august health? How was the road? It is written, voyaging is victory."

Hagan answered, "It is also written that travel is a small piece of hell, and only a fool goes without need. It is good to be here. How is Your Excellency's exalted health?"

This went on for some while, with Yunus renewing his inquiries, and Hagan reiterating his own. The old man's eyes betrayed the impatience that face and posture concealed, but he would not ask about Corlett.

Finally Hagan took the record player and the records from the saddle bags. "I got these from Kemal's *robat*. They make music and news."

"You got these from Kemal?"

"From his servant Dmitri. You remember how Kemal rode after us from here?"

"Yes, by Allah. He rode."

"And he overtook us."

"Verily, with fast riding, one overtakes the slow rider."

"And there were riders even faster. They were ahead of us, and they waited for us. They fired with the setting sun behind them. Kemal has learned the fullness of Allah's mercy. So likewise for Kemal's two men. I and my man, we were not touched."

Yunus said, "Behold what God makes!"

Those who sat with Yunus echoed his pious exclamation, and looked amazed.

Hagan went on, "We went, and we came back. But before we use these things I brought, let us talk about oil."

"There is nothing to say, and the peace upon you."

"Kemal said that oil drilling would spoil your lands, and Kemal is dead."

"The truth he spoke," Yunus contended, "did not die with him. And more than Kemal told us that oil makes trouble and war."

"The radio explained all that?"

"By Allah, it did. It told of all manner of things, and especially of oil and the *Inglesi* and the *Amrikani* who eat the land wherever they go."

"You believe all you hear?"

"This was well ordered, well reasoned. Everywhere, people are fighting against governments that sell the country to foreigners."

"Your radio always tells the truth?"

"Can all men always be liars? In Cairo, in Damascus, in Ankara, in Hindustan, all of them?"

Yunus spat, and said, "Whose dog is this, to mock true believers?"

"Those men," Hagan countered, "are only one man. And I have brought that man back. If I prove him a liar out of his own words, will you make peace with Faraj'ullah, and let us look for oil?"

"Where? What man?"

"He will speak for himself. He will tell you that there is no truth in him. He will tell you that he is the grandfather of lies, and that the news he spoke to you was like a madman shouting into a well."

"I see you, I see Ayyub. What other man?"

"Let him speak for himself. Promise me a promise: that if you call him a liar by his own words, neither you nor any of your men will hold out against Faraj'ullah's oil drilling."

"I have promised you a promise. Now let him speak."

Hagan set the turntable spinning. Yunus and his men showed their surprise at hearing the familiar voice. Hagan nudged Ayyub, who said, "You got the right one." Then, to Yunus, in Persian, "This is what you heard the day we came to you for protection. Fighting in Damascus."

Yunus answered, "I have heard such things before. Once the words are put down, the speaking does not change. He

said, there is fighting in Damascus. How need that be false?"

"Next number, Ayyub, and get it right."

The Kurd set on another disc. He whispered, "Watch their faces!"

Hagan watched. He saw first perplexity, then suspicion, then outright indignation. "What does he say, Yunus Khan?"

The old man answered, "He speaks of how the infidels mistreat pilgrims on the way to Mecca."

"How can that be?" Hagan retorted. "When it is not yet the season for the pilgrimage? Is that man Allah, to know what will happen a month from now?

"Is it not written in the Holy and Excellent Qu'ran, in the chapter entitled, The Cow, *Allah knoweth that which is past, and that which is to come unto men, and they shall not comprehend anything of his knowledge, except insofar as He pleaseth.*"

"Verily, it is written," Yunus acknowledged, and his retainers said, "*Amin!*"

"Then is this man God, to tell what is to come? Listen to another—"

The next record also was dated for the future, and the following one likewise. Yunus spat, and said, "I take refuge with the Lord of the Daybreak! Whose dog is this, to mock true believers?"

"So now there is understanding between us, and we drill for oil," Hagan said.

Yunus answered, "I promised you a promise. Where did you find this thing?"

"In the mountains, as I told you. Kemal mocked you, and someone shot Kemal. Kemal and a Russian were mocking you all the time. I went to find my missing friend, and I found this. Try your radio, and see what news it gives you now."

Hagan could afford whatever risk there might have been in such a challenge, if only because he was present, and could if the set did by some freak pick up a legitimate program, point out the differences between that and the canned news which had kept Yunus and his men oil-shy and looking for trouble. But as the day wore on, and the radio brought nothing from far off lands, the risk justified itself. He was able to relax, and lounge in the dusky reception room, and tell Yunus of the gadgets and the schools and the free medical services which followed in the trace of "imperialistic" developments. To an audience wrathful from Red blasphemy, inducements which had previously fallen flat now became alluring.

LOOKOUTS came to report that the detachment of Irani troops which had marched into the mountains was withdrawing. Hagan proposed that he and Yunus ride out to congratulate the commander on his victory; Faraj'ullah, it seemed, had accompanied the expedition. Yunus agreed, saying, "Better take him presents, than have him come here and eat everything."

Hagan went with Azerbaijani escort to meet the column of horse and motorized troops, where it was preparing to pitch camp in the foothills. Yunus, being a person of importance, had first to send messengers to announce his intention of paying respects, whereas anyone as unimportant as a geologist could properly go and ask for an audience.

Faraj'ullah was in his tent, where he received Hagan without delay. "I am happy to see you," he said. "My nephew is glad to see you."

Khudayar Khan, stepping forward, smiled knowingly. "The success of our rescue party makes things look very much better for us. I hope you'll not be inclined to say anything that might be misunderstood. We went to considerable trouble to find you. Now, strictly off the record, what did happen?"

"Mustafa told you where I was going?"

Faraj'ullah answered, "He made representations. From a saint's tomb, where I could not arrest him. He—but you know these ignorant Azerbaijanis, he suspected me of suspecting him of having been an accomplice of those Reds who seized Mr. Corlett. What did happen? As my nephew puts it, strictly off the record."

"First let me give you one *for* the record: Yunus Manioglu is entirely happy about your plans for oil prospecting. He saw the light, and he will call on you. To congratulate you on your victory over the rebels. And, to offer you his cooperation in developing his lands."

"Splendid!" Faraj'ullah glowed; he drew himself up majestically; his nostrils flared as he turned to Khudayar. "You see, my boy? A demonstration, with field artillery to support the Irani cavalryman—the times do not change! The Irani

trooper, and the Irani sword, that is what it takes to govern a province, and uphold prestige. And prove that the damned Communists only get people into needless trouble."

Hagan saw no use in giving his off-the-record account. Faraj'ullah was entirely too happy with results to be bothered with facts. So he asked, "Any trace of Corlett?"

"Oh, yes. I regret to tell you that he was killed by a stray bullet—there was mopping up, you understand—after we rescued him. Come, you must see for yourself. I regret this—it pains me deeply—he was your comrade—you went gallantly out to liberate him singlehanded—indeed, your valor made my officers jealous, they insisted that I take a hand, and help them redeem Persian honor. But, you must identify him, to close the case, officially."

Hagan's glance shifted to Khudayar. Though the young man's face was properly solemn and official, an expressive light burned in his dark eyes. He whispered, as they followed his uncle, "Never mind what you think you know about all this. If you must talk, talk to me in private. I'd like to know how the devil you got through. I spotted you through artillery 'scopes, when you and Ayyub were on the skyline for a few minutes during the shooting."

Hagan countered, "I'd like to know how Corlett got this far."

Khudayar's knowing look sharpened. "You might ask Dmitri Barlov. Wounds kept him from making his getaway."

"So Dmitri isn't liquidated yet?"

"Of course not. There'll be some slight ceremony first."

"Trial and so on?"

"Mmmm . . . well . . . not as you understand trials. My uncle has conservative attitudes. The slight ceremony will undoubtedly consist of blowing the man from the mouth of a field gun. Frightful waste of ammunition, but there is the publicity value."

Then they came to the stretcher, on which Corlett lay. It was shaded by a tent-fly. A squad of soldiers, standing at attention, came to "present arms" at the governor's approach. "Guard of honor," Khudayar whispered. "My uncle decided on giving him a hero's funeral. And a posthumous decoration."

Faraj'ullah cleared his throat. "Mr. Hagan, I apologize again for the pain which this causes, but I must request identification."

The guard of honor stepped clear. Hagan looked intently at the man who had died to spread Moscow-made religion. The face, though recognizable, was not pleasant to see. Flies buzzed sickeningly. A vulture's shadow made a moving blot on the ground.

Hagan squatted to get a better look at the wound which had lifted the top of Corlett's head.

Powder burn marked the entrance of the bullet at the base of the brain. As nearly as Hagan could tell, there was no other wound. If Faraj'ullah wanted to call it a stray bullet, that was Irani business. But Hagan said, "He was near Dmitri when you released him?"

"Oh, yes, guarded to the end."

THEY had Dmitri lashed to a gun carriage, and baking in the heat. His lips were black. He opened his eyes when Hagan's shadow fell over his face. The Russian's mouth worked as if he wanted to spit at Hagan, but from dryness was unable. Hagan shook his head, and spoke to the soldier on guard. The man surrendered his canteen. Hagan said, "A thing done has an end. Drink first, and then spit wherever you want."

Dmitri drank. Then, "What do you want?"

"Not what you think. Nothing I want to do against you. Nothing I can do for you, and I'd not do anything for you if I could."

Dmitri's face twisted in something like an expression of entire appreciation. He also was a realist.

Hagan went on, "How did you get so far front, after I'd locked you up, and turned the horses loose?"

Dmitri had a moment of triumph. "Another caravan of guns came up, and let us out."

"Want a cigarette?"

"Another question?"

"Yes."

"Very well."

Hagan held the smoke to the man's mouth, and after a moment said, "You shot Corlett, which I didn't have the guts

to do when I should have, and could have. But why?"

"For his bourgeoisie sentimentality. That damned charcoal!"

Hagan gave him another puff, and another sip. Then he dug into his pocket. "Here is the note Kemal wrote for me, to give you. A safe conduct. I can read Persian, so I didn't give it to you. He asked you to be sure and finish me. He suspected I'd had a hand in the ambush that settled him."

Hagan stepped back. His shadow was replaced fleetingly by that of a scavenger bird who waited for what was to come. He turned to give the canteen back to the soldier. The man grimaced, and refused, saying he'd rather drink after a pig than after an infidel.

Though Faraj'ullah and his nephew had been watching the meeting, they asked no question when Hagan rejoined them. Khudayar said, "My uncle tells me that Yunus Manioglu's message was very friendly. And now that all this is settled, I am sure that you and I can get along nicely in the field. I do wish to learn the practical side of your work. Are you willing?"

"I am." He offered his hand. "Shake on it. We've already mapped a few domes well worth drilling." Then, to Faraj-'ullah: "Your Excellency, I have had some rough days. May I go now, and wait at the *robat* until we're ready to carry on with the survey?"

"By all means!" The governor clapped Hagan on the shoulder. "Now that these Azerbaijani pigs have seen that administration can back its authority, you'll be perfectly safe. Good luck, Mr. Hagan, and if there is anything I can do—"

"There is, sir. Turn Mustafa loose, and tell him I have the money I owe him."

Hagan mounted up, and rode back with the Azerbaijani horsemen.

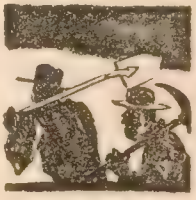
He was within the shadow of the *robat* when the blast of a field gun echoed among the foothills.

"What the hell?"

Ayyub, as usual, had the answer: "That Red was pretty far gone, so Faraj'ullah couldn't save him till Yunus came to see them blow him from the cannon."

"Riley Grannan's Last Adventure"

This is the classic of funeral sermons—the sermon delivered in a burlesque theater in Rawhide, Nevada, by Herman W. Knickerbocker, the busted preacher-prospector, over the body of Riley Grannan, the dead-broke gambler.



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HOT-ROD

The Prof jumped through the hole between Two and Three and from then on it was murder.

•

COLEMAN MEYER

THE racing game always seems to get peopled by a lot of daffy characters. And, if they're not daffy when they arrive, it doesn't take them too long to get acclimated. The Professor is a good case in point.

He isn't really a professor. He just looks that way. And don't sell him short

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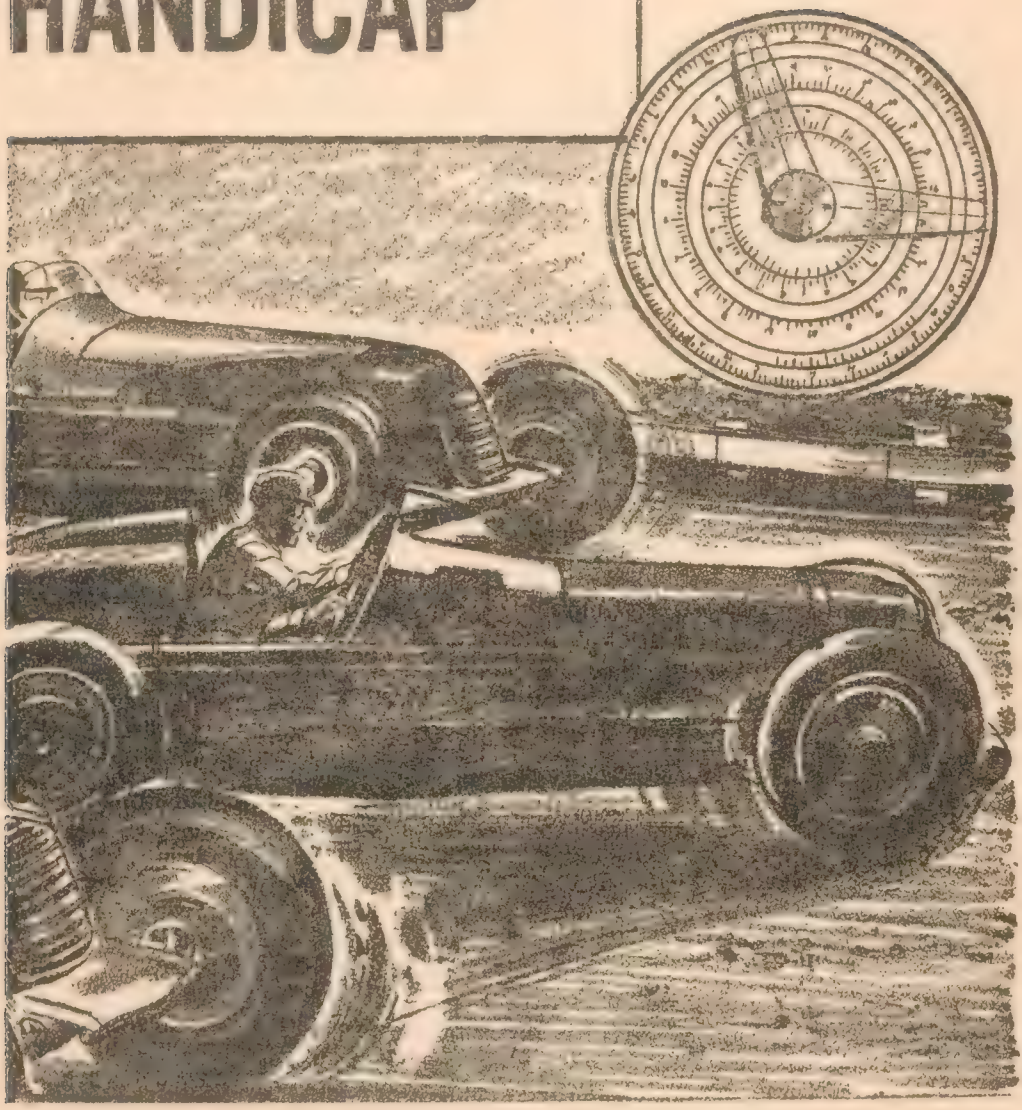

because of the glasses and the fact that he sometimes forgets to say "dem" and "dose." He's learning fast when it comes to herding the King's English. And he already knew all the answers when it comes to herding a hot iron into a flat dirt corner. The Prof is hell on wheels and you want to come prepared with plenty of stomach if you think you can bluff him out when the engine is turning six thousand r. p. m. He's already found out you can't run a couple of hundred horsepower with a slide rule and a sharp pencil.

And just as soon as we can teach him to drink with both hands he'll be a fine

addition to our little team. He's already chucked away the slip stick.

Iffy Davis was responsible for the Prof. Iffy runs a flock of single-seaters and we had run into a flock of trouble, expensive trouble.

First Bull Jensen let Number Three get away from him on the mile dirt at Santa Rosa and crumpled up ten thousand dollars' worth of iron. Iffy hadn't gotten all the wrinkles out of Three when I got myself into trouble on the Goshen half-mile and suddenly we had another racing car that was full of accordion pleats.

Then, two weeks after that, little Tommy Beckett rolled Number Two upside down at Oakland and we were practically out of business.

Iffy took one disgusted look after Tommy crawled out of the wreckage unhurt. "Drivers!" he said lugubriously. "Pffui!" As soon as he was sure that Tommy wasn't too wrinkled up personally he tore out what little hair he has remaining. "Drivers, I got contracts on! Truck drivers, I should get! Or bus drivers, maybe!" Then he vanished after saying threateningly, "From here on in things are gonna be different. I know where I can get a guy who can add and maybe he can teach you ham-handed blunderers that there is no percentage in winning a two thousand dollar purse and breaking up a ten thousand dollar car to do it!"

It was the tail end of the second week when he returned to the garage where we were ironing out the bumps, smiled frostily and said, "This is Art Campbell, fellas. He'll be with us for a while as manager and maybe relief driver. Just so we get off on the right foot, we'll all understand that what he says goes, from here on in!"

Bull took one look at him and breathed, "My God! A professor!"

Campbell was a nice-looking kid, lean, brown-faced. The horn-rimmed glasses gave him a faintly academic air and his mild voice furthered the impression as we went into a huddle. He bulged all over with books and slide rules and pencils.

"You chaps have been racing for a long time," he said mildly. "I don't profess to tell you that you don't know anything about the racing business. But I'm afraid the facts will back me up when I say that some of your knowledge is being misapplied!"

"Misapplied?" Bull scowled.

"That's right," the Prof replied brightly. "You approach this business as though it has no rules. Yet it is really a science. To put it another way—you demand too much of luck."

"Son," Tommy put in caustically, "I not only demand it—I have to have it! You ever put one of these cans into a seventy-mile-an-hour corner at ninety? You think you don't need luck—"

"I have—and I know," the Prof replied equably. "Mine is not strictly an academic approach. That much I shall prove a little later. Right now, however, that's just what I'm talking about—seventy-mile turns at ninety. And that's why you gentlemen are presently engaged in sheet metal work! Let me put it this way: a racing car is nothing but a problem in mathematics. It weighs just so much and at any given speed on any given radius of turn exerts a given centrifugal force . . ."

I won't go into the rest of it. It went on for hours and he twisted that circular slide rule as he talked. Gist of it was that no matter how good you were, a corner could be made only so fast. Beyond that point the odds against staying right side up were impracticably high and so on.

"Tomorrow," he finished calmly, "we'll work out at Dixon and I'll check the cars myself. We'll assign them speed factors and run them in accordance with those findings."

"And that," Bull muttered, "I want to see."

DIXON'S flat half-mile is only an hour's run from our garage. I had to admit that the Prof looked professional when he got out of Iffy's car, unzippered his handbag and extracted coveralls, crash helmet and goggles.

And a half hour after that we had to admit that he could do more than just *talk* racing like it was from McGuffy's Reader. We've got three cars and a spare and by the time he juggled the spare around that trick half-mile even Bull was more amenable to listening and had a trace of respect in his eyes.

But the Prof wasn't out for plaudits. He stiff-springed the spare back into the

pits totally blind to approval or disapproval. All he did was make a few marks on paper, hoist himself out, and stare abstractedly at the paper for a moment. Then he lined us up like schoolkids. "Now, if each of you will drive a few laps in your own car. One at a time, if you please. I want to analyze things . . ."

"Analyze!" Bull moaned in a stricken tone as we walked to our cars. "After fifteen years in the racing business I'm being 'analyzed!'" And, when we shoved him off I realized that the analysis was going to be difficult.

When the Bull really wants to go nobody in North America catches him. After a couple of bedding-down laps he came by with one finger up signifying he'd have all the burners lit in the next lap. They were.

He didn't kill himself. But he damn near threw the whole track into the next county. Number Three started at the rail, picked up the axle slack and then Bull's big foot hit the mat and Three's hundred and eighty horses threw rocks and dirt and lumber all over the place. The Lord happened to be looking and Bull made the corner.

The Prof didn't even bother to watch the rest of the lap. He walked out to the track, held up a hand for the Bull to come in. "Thank you, Mr. Jensen," he said coldly. "That was splendid. Now—if you don't mind. I'd like a few laps *inside* the confines of the racetrack!"

That tore the bag for Bull and he was babbling loosely as we shoved him off again. But he did turn in a couple of good laps. Tommy and I followed in complete mystification and when we had finished the Prof said, "Thank you, gentlemen. You can load up now!" And he departs with Iffy, leaving us with tools and gas cans and race cars strung all over the speedway. I thought Bull was going to blow a gasket.

Iffy corralled us at the hotel that night. "You guys," he grunted. "Upstairs. A meeting."

The Prof was there. And as well as him was the blackboard and the slide rule and a long wooden pointer. He had chairs lined up in front of the board like a schoolroom.

"I have," he beamed, "compiled the results of our findings of today." He made some marks on the blackboard. "Each of these cars," he droned, "has a certain potential power and speed. Each has, also, certain qualities of adhesion gained by a particular combination of tire treads and weight. These factors are all susceptible of calculation, mechanical actualities we can depend upon."

He surveyed us gravely over the glasses. "That leaves," he added, "only the human element—you men. From my observations I have assigned each of you a value in accordance with your observed driving skill. Now, by utilizing all of these known quantities, we can set up a problem in forces that will tell us exactly and precisely—within the slight variables of the human element—exactly how fast each of these cars can mathematically circle any given speedway and still remain with the limits of probabilities when it comes to completing each lap safely! And that, gentlemen," he finished proudly, "is the basis this team will compete on from this point forward!"

WE WERE on the mile dirt at Hanford the following week end and the Prof bustled into the pit with a handful of paper. "I have this worked out," he announced. "Mr. Jensen, a study of your factors indicates that you can and should average 44 seconds per lap. Mr. Beckett will average 45 seconds and Mr. Stearns"—that was me—"will run one second slower. A survey of previous events at this speedway shows that no previous hundred mile event has been won faster than a 44-second average. Therefore you should win by maintaining that speed regardless of what happens or who leads for the initial part of the race." His upraised hand stifled off Tommy's indignant bellow. Tommy is about as good as they come on slightly-banked miles such as Hanford. "Now, now," he soothed. "I'm not implying that you cannot go faster, Mr. Beckett. I'm only saying that this is the way we'll run it. A good general never throws all of his troops into the first charge. Mr. Jensen will be the forward line, the first wave in a manner of speaking. You will be the first reserve, perhaps five or six places behind. Should anything such as engine failure happen to Mr. Jensen I shall expect you to move up in exact accordance with the pit signals. The same with Mr. Stearns."

Iffy, standing at his side, nodded approval. "You will understand," the Prof continued, "that your board of strategy is in the pits, that they have calculated all the factors of safety and potential speeds as well as the relative positions of all other cars. Therefore—" his voice became slightly edged—"you will kindly drive in strict accordance with the signals you receive."

I was so confused that we were five miles out in the main event before I found out where the hell I was supposed to be driving and then only after frantic pit boards kept pulling my foot off the throttle. This was a brand-new experience—after fifteen years I find myself back among the chopped-up Fords and taxicabs.

After a while Bull lapped me. He shook a chiding finger as he steamed on by. Rolly Calder was only a coat of paint behind him and Rolly sniggered right in my outraged countenance as he passed. I boiled all over and went out to teach him some manners. It took six laps of pit boards to get me back where I belonged.

Somewhere around the seventy-fifth lap the board came up with a bland "P/11-9 (42)" indicating that things were shaping up nicely and would I mind passing Eleven and Nine and that it was O.K. to boost it to 42 seconds a lap in so doing. I cursed bitterly at the blandness of the board. With all this running around on the rev counter and holding a pace I didn't know where Eleven and Nine were or, for that matter, what place I was holding myself.

I finally found Eleven. It was Ward Petersen and he was a hell of a long ways away. Forty-two seconds was putting in your bid for a harp and a halo but I put the throttle down to that point marked "For Angels only!" and it took me ten sweating miles to run him down. By the time I caught Nine I was a nervous wreck.

Eventually somebody waved a checkered flag and I came in to find that I had finished fourth, that Bull and Tommy had taken first and second.

"You see," the Prof beamed proudly. "It's all simple arithmetic. No scratches on the cars, we have three out of four places—"

"I see." Tommy glowered at Bull. "And somebody has himself a first place he'd have a hell of a time getting without all this slide rule foolishness."

"You mean me?" Bull bristled. "Why you little sawed-off shrimp, I can hang the pants on you on this track the best day you ever—"

"That's fine," I said bitterly. "You guys argue about first and second place. Me—I get fourth place and stomach ulcers from that last ten miles."

WE RAN at Goshen, at Fresno and then at Clovis, all on this daffy railroad timetable. It wasn't a hundred percent but we did all right. I was supposed to win at Goshen but Rolly Calder got hot, polished off the track record and the main event. "That will happen," the Prof explained calmly. "That's the way you fellows were running before. Rolly put his faith in luck, not science, and it happened to work out that way. Next time, in all probability, he'll roll his car over."

But you can't keep a secret around the racing gang. And, at Clovis, life was getting difficult. They made a gag out of it there and the announcer played it up on the public address system as one of the stewards presented each of us with a big, red apple for the teacher. Every time you'd pass a guy in the pits he'd hold up his hand and ask for permission to leave the room.

That wasn't all. Individually we had pretty fair reputations that could scare a guy off a corner if you couldn't drive him off. Now, hanging around the tail end with the tow-cars and the tractors, even the "B" class iron herders didn't turn a hair when you shoved your nose in to try to pass. They made you do it the hard way.

And finally, by the time we got to the Oakland ⅝ cement strip, I was getting so shaky I had to take two hands to get a glass up to my face. The Prof and Iffy would sit in the pit and issue those bland orders—"Pass 7 and 8"—never considering that Seven and Eight were a couple of fine automobiles driven by a couple of fine guys, guys you'd feel quite honored to pass if they were only two coats of lacquer ahead.

Only now, dabbling around with this

dippy schedule, they were usually on the other side of the track.

I just missed getting fitted for wings and a three-stringed harp at Oakland trying to comply with one of those pit boards so I collared the Prof in the bar at the St. Marks that night. Bull and Tommy were with me. "Look," I said. "I'm all caught up with this business. Iffy may be satisfied. I'm not!"

"And that goes double!" Tommy chimed in belligerently. "You send me out after Ward Petersen today—and him with a half mile lead! Right now you're looking at a guy who's living on borrowed time!"

The Prof considered that for a moment, twirling his glass between the palms of his hand. Then he shook his head. "I was afraid of this. Mathematically this is a perfect set-up. The figures—"

"Figures, hell!" Bull exploded. "I'm getting pushed around by guys who couldn't put air in my tires under ordinary circumstances. Racing is my business and and I been doing all right for fifteen years. Without a chart and slide rule, too! This business is a racket for guys with guts, not sharks with sharp pencils!"

The Prof stiffened slightly. "You mean," he asked quietly, "that I'm ordering you do something I can't do myself?"

I stifled off Bull's hot reply. "He means," I explained, "that you can't make a street-car motorman out of a racing driver. Some days a guy is hot. And when he's hot he can't be beat. Like Rolly Calder at Goshen. That's what makes this business fun."

"I see," the Prof mused. "I see." He paused, fiddled with the glass some more. "I placed at Indianapolis twice in the first six," he ruminated. "Atlanta, Langhorne—" he named half a dozen others—"and every one of these responded to calculations within the limits of the car and my particular ability. I have never 'been hot'."

"Well then," Bull growled. "You never won a racemeet."

"True," the Prof agreed a trifle wistfully. "Nobody ever came around asking for my autograph." He snapped the glass on the bar with a click. "O.K., gentlemen. We'll try it! Santa Rosa, next Sunday. No timetables, no orders!"

"You mean it?" Bull beamed.

"Not only mean it," the Prof assented, "but inasmuch as there seems to be some slight doubt of my, ah, intestinal fortitude, I'll take Number Six. Maybe," he added fairly, "I've been missing something."

SANTA ROSA is about the trickiest strip in the circuit; straightaways as long as the Penn Turnpike, corners short enough to fit inside your kitchen. And, six feet outside the crash wall, strong, sturdy trees that give you the jitters.

The Prof came loaded for bear—crash helmet, goggles and patched coveralls that had that "used" look. We worked out Saturday and he was all right. He was no jet job but Six was getting a pretty fair ride. We left in the afternoon and the Prof was still throwing dirt over the fence.

Sunday saw the ramshackle grandstand well-loaded even for the time trials. There were no heats, just a hundred mile main for the twelve fastest qualifiers and a consolation event for the double-parkers. I qualified early and hung up a 44.2 that made it a cinch for the main. Bull and Tommy got it over early also and we sat tight to watch the Prof go. He sort of bugged our eyes out when he slammed Six around in under 45 seconds.

Bull and Tommy had something cooking on the fire. I should have realized what it was when I saw their heads together but just then Iffy came over. "Remember," he warned, "you'll only start with five gallons. The rules call for a gas stop just to perk up the yokels. We'll handle you two at a time in the pits. You come in with the Prof."

Iffy's team had quite a representation at the starting line. Bull and Tommy in Two and Three were in the front line, Rolly Calder in Number One was alongside me in the second row and the Prof in Six had the pole in the third row.

We poured off on the green flag on a track that was throwing big, wet clods instead of dust and I nodded to myself. By the time this was half over we'd be through the wet topsoil. Then, heaven help the guys in back. They'd have to fly it on instruments. I hoped the Prof could take it.

By the time we got three laps under our belt and I saw Rolly slide around the leaders I knew what had been frying. Bull and Tommy had let Rolly on by to get at

the Prof and he was due to get the book tossed at him. I hesitated for a moment, then moved over to let Number Six by. He'd have to take it sometime. Might as well be now.

The Prof was an eager beaver, jumped through the hole I'd left and stuck his chrome spreader bar right between the crimson Number Two and the gleaming yellow of Bull's Number Three. From then on it was murder.

They sucked him right up in the center of a loose V. And for twenty five miles they gave him everything that thirty collective years of racing knew. It was plenty; they did everything but pull him out of the car and rub his face in the dirt. Tommy would pin him on the outside and Bull, low and on the apron, would heave on the coal. His big rear hoops would empty half the track into the Prof's cockpit.

Then they held him in the middle of the V, ran the stretch wide open—and shut off completely right at the turn as they pulled together.

The Prof had full-on brake and full-off throttle, looking for a hole. I thought he was going to hit them. Then they jumped the gun, spread apart and were gone, leaving him sitting there, foolishly, with a whole track to play in and practically a dead engine.

I hung around in back watching the show. There was nothing I could do; every man has to kill his own snakes in this business and Bull and Tommy were trying to demonstrate that there's a few tricks not printed in the book. But I did give the Prof full marks. He never quit trying and, strangely enough, he got smart quick. He got the fire lit under the burners in a hurry and was back in there pitching and I noticed that it was never the same trick twice that caught him. I suddenly realized that he was getting a lot smarter when we all picked up Rolly in the lead and cruised by him. You don't do that on a motor scooter.

Iffy was going crazy in the pit and kept hanging up signal boards that nobody obeyed until I caught a glimpse of him waving his arms and pointing to a board that said: G/5-6. I pulled up a length on the Prof, pointed at the gas tank. He nodded and dropped out of the rough triangle he was running in.

We bumped into the pits. Somebody handed us cokes. I swabbed the dirt from my throat, listened idly to Iffy's vivid description of the forthcoming evisceration of Tommy and Bull.

The Prof vaulted from his car as they were filling it with fuel. Something sailed over the pit rail. He was rolling up his sleeves as he passed me hurriedly on the way back.

"Rough time," I shouted over the roar of passing cars. He halted. His bleak face parted in a grin. Then he nodded as he faced me and I suddenly choked on a mouthful of coke. The Prof's mild eyes were actually shining. And—so help me! —there was the light of battle there. Then they pushed us off.

YOU read about the rest of it, I guess. All the racing sheets carried the story. It was quite a show. I automatically tagged on to the Prof when we started and it was five miles before I suddenly awoke to the fact that the pace he was setting had my wheels running right between a pair of tombstones, both with my name written on them.

Bull and Tommy were next in for gas as was Rolly Calder so it all came out even. And, by the time the pit board showed seventy-five miles, we all finally got together, all five of us in the same lap and holding the first five places.

It took ten more miles to close up the formation real tight. By that time every corner was a separate adventure in insanity and the only thing that kept me between the rails was the Power of Prayer. Tommy's crimson Two was leading. Bull was outside of him and abreast. And the Prof had the nose right in there, shoving hard. Rolly and I were two coats of paint behind.

And everybody had gone crazy.

The backstretch was a mad howling ride with the corner rushing back as though somebody threw it at you. No one shut off and when I snatched a glance behind I realized that nobody *dared* shut off. It was solid dirt and the guy that got in that cloud was out of business.

Tommy lifted his foot for axle slack. The Prof didn't. Number Six came charging in like an army tank. And suddenly there were three of them, side by side, in

a corner that wouldn't hold one at this speed.

Rolly made up his mind. There was going to be a stack-up. He reached for the brake. The dust cloud swallowed him and he was out of work. I was so startled I got myself into the corner almost wide open.

And then I watched the prettiest driving I had ever seen.

The Prof was in the center as Tommy cocked for the broadslide. He matched him rev for rev and Six folded neatly inside the angle of Tommy's car. And even as he slid, the Prof's head was gauging Bull so he wouldn't tag his car on the outside.

We made the whole corner that way. And the next ten, too. A large rug would have covered the four of us. I had a grandstand seat only inches behind and it was too good a show to miss. Even if we did hash up.

Ninety-five miles. And still a large rug would do. The backstretch. I see Tommy's head turn. He looks at the Prof and then at Bull. His hand comes off the wheel, make a circle with his fingers. Then he points at the Prof. Bull nods.

We hit the corner with everything unbuttoned. Then I found out I'd pushed my luck too far. There was a little hole in the track, the back end hit, jumped. Then there was lumber flying, metal clanging. And then there was suddenly nothing.

The three of them came trooping around to the tail end of the ambulance where I was lying on the stretcher. There wasn't anything wrong with me that a little sewing couldn't cure.

Bull was grinning sheepishly. "How are you feeling?" he asked.

"I'm all right. Tell me—how did it come out?"

Bull jerked a thumb toward the Prof. "We was doing fine. And, on the last corner, the Prof lets out a hell of a yell. It startles me so much I get off the gun and he's through the hole and chops off Tommy before the shrimp finds out what's cooking." He sniggered as his ham hand clapped the Prof on the shoulder. "Yeah—the Prof's a real hot shot now. He just told Iffy t'hell with it. He's gonna drive Six from now on and we oughta have some fun."

I glanced at the Prof, was mildly amused at the pride that flooded his face at Bull's words.

"Tell me," I said. "When we were in the pits for gas—what did you get out of your can for?"

"Oh, that!" Embarrassment flamed. Then he matched Bull's sheepishness. "That slide rule. I had it inside my coveralls and it was poking me in the stomach. I just went over to chuck it away!"

"You been washed up a long time, mister. Tonight's the time it shows. It's a sucker fight, pal—an' you're it!"

Read William Campbell Gault's magnificent story of an old leather slinger who couldn't take oblivion—SUCKER FIGHT—in the great November issue of NEW SPORTS MAGAZINE.

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THE FAKIR OF MARRAKESH

By

BERNARD SIMIOT

Translated from
the French by

GEORGES SURDEZ

ILLUSTRATED BY
EARL EUGENE MAYAN

THE convoy of military trucks had reached Fort Gouraud, in the Occidental Sahara, thirteen hundred miles from Casablanca on the north, close to nine hundred miles from Dakar on the south. In the courtyard of the post, the Negro soldiers, Senegalese *tirailleurs,* were busy unloading, happy and grinning, supplies for four months: sacks of flour, rice, potatoes and onions, tins of beef and fish, sardines, lard and sugar, cases of macaroni, cases of bottles and barrels of wine.

Watching them without much interest, casual and indifferent, were the members of a patrol of the Camel Corps, Moorish

A howl of terror filled the yard. Everyone dashed off in indescribable disorder—all but Salem. He remained rooted to the spot.

Guards; tall, bearded, brown men, wearing flowing white garments, crisscrossed by cartridge bandoliers and red scarfs, armed with French cavalry carbines, French bayonets and their own curved knives. Trusted with the control of the path through the Iguidi Dunes Region, they had brought to the outpost a caravan of Reguibat tribesmen, coming north from the Sudan. These natives, clad in indigo-hued garments, squatted in an angle of the surrounding wall, silent, motionless, watching with their pillagers' eyes the sacks, cases and bales.

In that anonymous group, however, one man was conspicuous: an old Negro with a shaven skull, dressed in a lighter blue cloak—his face wrinkled, thin, almost fleshless. His hands were extraordinarily narrow and long, and between the stick like, bony fingers, he held a religious rosary, the beads of which were formed by small black and white sea shells. He was mumbling.

"You're looking at Hamamma?" the lieutenant commanding the post asked me, as he shook my hand. "He's a sort of Sudanese sorcerer who comes through here once a year. Goes south to replenish his collection of snakes which he shows to tourists on the Djemaa-el-Fna Place in Marrakesh. He is waiting here to pick up a northbound caravan. A worthless fakir. Come on, the doctor and Salem are waiting for us at mess—we'll have a long drink—"

The doctor was young, a colonial army surgeon, and very gay. Salem was the orderly, promoted to steward and barman. He was called, like all Negro soldiers, a Senegalese, but was in fact a Sudanese, a Bambara, a tall, muscular, chocolate-colored young chap, with white, gleaming teeth, tribal scars slashing his cheeks—and the smile of a little child. Garbed in immaculate whites, the scarlet bonnet propped on his head, he looked very well with the rows of bottles behind him. He concocted the drinks like an expert.

I had come up with the trucks and the two Europeans were glad to talk with an outsider, a man with news of the cities. But we were interrupted before long by a strange music. It sounded like a mixture of oboe and clarinet, light, airy, with sprightly, mad notes.

"Hamamma," Salem said, suddenly very serious.

"The snake charmer?" I asked.

"Yes," the lieutenant replied, "the old sorcerer you were admiring a few minutes ago. If you like, we'll go to see him do his stunts."

The soldiers, Negroes and Moors, had formed a circle around the old man who was playing his queer-looking flute. From a sack of leather laid on the ground before him, I saw the sinister head of a large snake emerge, sway and come forward. His slow crawling seemed to fascinate all those present. In the sudden silence that closed down on the yard, the little flute took on considerable importance. The fingers of the sorcerer sped along the instrument with bewildering agility and fetched sounds so precipitated, so brief and so sharp that they held something awing, devilish.

That music did not come from Morocco or the Sudan. It was not suited to dance to, nor to pray, nor to love, nor to fight—yet one had the definite impression that Hamamma was struggling against something powerful, that he was compelled to keep up his rhythm and his airy modulations to captivate and hold the reptile in the light mesh of his melody.

Completely out of the sack, the snake now appeared in all his splendor. He was a cobra of unusual size, more than ten feet long, black and yellow, with moving coppery reflections, and the flat of his enormous head was adorned by two large, dark moon-shaped markings which widened like the pupils of a cat in a strong light. All around, men stood very still, their eyes fastened on the monster, already under the spell. Only the lieutenant seemed at ease, as he smiled and whispered to me, "Fake."

As if to pass us in review the cobra slithered slowly around the sorcerer, then came to a sharp stop. Then he moved again, to coil on himself, and from the wavering soft mass he formed, his head detached itself and started to raise straight up like the pistil of some enormous flower growing before our very eyes.

The spell seemed to reach its maximum effect. Bent over his reed, Hamamma was striving to surpass his own skill, his fingers flew, splashed us with rapid sounds in an unknown mode, while the snake

swayed from right to left, from left to right, upon a noble rhythm that corresponded nevertheless most exactly with the music of which he surely understood the secret. Hamamma seemed to have some trouble keeping up with him; he was beginning to lose breath, but the implacable conductor changed pace only to sway more rapidly. In truth, all that seemed very odd to me and I was wondering which was the more powerful sorcerer, the Sudanese or his snake, when the lieutenant whispered, "Take a look at our boy."

SALEM had left the bar and pushed his way to the front row of spectators. He was right before the cobra, and he too was under the spell. Swinging his head from right to left, from left to right, he followed very precisely all the movements of the reptile, his eyes holding those of the monster, acting like those people in the theater who reproduce without knowing it the play of features of the actors.

Emanating from the sorcerer, the magnetic fluid had first bewitched the snake and then had mysteriously communicated itself to the big Negro soldier, so that those three beings now were caught in the same trap, dragged in the same magic circle, enchanted pieces of a miniature planetary system. It seemed evident that the center of attraction of the reel was displacing itself more and more: Hamamma was almost unable to keep up the rhythm imposed upon him and the cobra was holding the advantage. Even as the head of Salem docilely followed the music, the melody dwindled in intensity, the fingers of the old man tightened on the reed, the cadence grew more nervous and took wings.

A terrible drama was being played before our eyes between the sorcerer and his snake, and the cobra had taken charge of the game, dominating, magnificent, swelling his golden scales to dilate those moon markings enormously, proud and mighty. Worn out, the old man could hardly hold his instrument, his wrinkled face dripped with sweat, flecks of foam at the corners of his lips, his eyes almost popped out of his head.

Suddenly, the cobra lunged out and struck a *tirailleur* on the thigh. A howl of terror filled the yard. Everyone dashed off straight ahead in an indescribable disorder. Shoving aside the doctor who was running toward the infirmary, even the bravest of the Negro soldiers were gripped by panic and were headed for their barracks. Only the lieutenant and Salem had held their ground.

"Help me carry this man," said the officer to the orderly.

Salem did not reply. He remained rooted to the spot, stupidly swaying tirelessly from right to left, from left to right.

"Come, snap out of it," repeated the lieutenant, sharply, but without result. The order had fallen into space as if it had not been heard.

It was then that we noticed that Salem's good-natured face had taken on an earthy hue, that his lips had turned gray. Holding in his hand a large hypodermic needle, the doctor returned, unbuttoned the bitten man's tunic and injected a good dose of serum into his abdomen.

"Think you can pull him through?" the lieutenant asked.

"Sure thing," said the doctor. "By pure luck, I had special serum for cobra bite."

"And have you noticed our boy?"

"Yes. I was watching him just a while back. I think we have a very odd case of hypnosis. After a good night's rest and some sedative, he'll be all right tomorrow." He hesitated a second before suggesting, "My hunch is that you better buck up our chaps."

The lieutenant's voice lashed out loudly in the empty yard. "Master-Sergeant Diallo."

Carbine in hand, a native non-commissioned officer arrived at the run. His skin also had turned gray and his teeth chattered. Nevertheless, he halted five paces away and came to attention.

"Where's Hamamma?" the officer asked.

"In the lockup, Lieutenant. I shut him up at once because our men wanted to kill him."

"Very well. Have they killed the snake?"

"No, Lieutenant," the master-sergeant stammered. "The snake—the snake has disappeared."

"Get your men in uniform and turn out for colors."

The doctor, who had taken the bitten man to the infirmary, returned to take care of Salem. We were still alone in the

yard, the *tirailleurs* were watching us from the windows of the barracks. We could see the eyes shining in their black faces and the glitter of steel as they fingered their weapons.

"What about the cobra?" I asked in my turn.

"Listen, civilian," the lieutenant retorted, "you're a very nice guy, but give us a few minutes' rest, won't you? Do you know where the cobra went? You don't? All we know is that he is somewhere in the post. It's going to be night inside fifteen minutes and if you care to look for him, try it. If he doesn't bite you first, I'll see that you get the Colonial Medal!" He turned to the doctor. "How many ampoules of serum have you got left?"

"About fifty, but absolutely useless against cobra bite. I used the last one on that guy."

"Good. The main thing just now seems to be to buck up those poor guys, as you suggested. At this moment, they'd be incapable of making a search for that snake."

Twilight does not last long in the Sahara. The sun had scarcely sunk below the horizon, as the bugle strung out the last notes of "colors," when the sky grew dark. I believe I shall relive all the details of the night that followed all my life. I can see everything, I can hear everything. I see the moving shadows, the furtive gestures, I hear the soft steps and the sharp click of a rifle bolt open and shut by nervous hands.

We dined in silence, hastily. The doctor said, "I am reassured about the man who was bitten; he follows a normal course. But I am afraid that Salem's case is worse than I thought at first. He still sways his head. I went through the neurological examination of his reflexes to determine what was the matter with him. I've learned nothing precise. All his reflexes seem perfectly normal. I'm forced to the conclusion that his trouble is solely psychic."

"So what—?" the lieutenant asked.

"So, the best I can do is give him sedatives and wait."

Wait! We waited all night, the doctor beside the bed of his patient, the lieutenant and I wandering rather aimlessly about the post.

WE WERE unwilling to confess it, but we were afraid. And the terrible part of that fear was that we did not know exactly of what we were afraid. Doubtless, the presence in the post of a snake whose bite was deadly did not precisely reassure us, especially as we knew that the doctor no longer had any proper serum, but it was not that which made us sweat with anguish and started our hearts to pounding. It was something more mysterious.

When we inspected the barracks, the electric torch of the lieutenant showed the eyes of the soldiers leering in their black faces, and we understood that they were watching each other to see whether some one among them would be gripped by the same strange malady that at the other end of the courtyard behind the lighted window of the infirmary, was killing Salem, like those minute worms that according to the legends of the Sudan creep silently into a man's ear to gnaw at his brain.

Sometimes we would go into the infirmary. The two *tirailleurs* were on cots, stretched on sheets as white as shrouds. The doctor was watching them.

"How does it go?" we would whisper.

"No worry about the bitten man. Just now, he is asleep, but a while back he ran a high temperature. That's quite normal. It's the serum's reaction."

"What about Salem?"

Mute, teeth clenched, eyes wide open, staring vacantly with his tense face still agitated by that pendulum motion, Salem seemed to be beating time to the last measures of his life. I shall always remember that moving shadow swaying against the white wall.

The doctor would come out into the yard with us, to get away from that hallucinating spectacle. When the three of us were together, we felt less afraid and we'd talk about the great problems of unknown psychology, not that we wished to shine as wise guys, but to struggle against our jittery nerves. "Let's go over it again from the beginning," the lieutenant would say, his logical mind rebelling against the unknown. Tirelessly, ten times, perhaps fifty times, we went over the details of the scene up to the point when the cobra had lunged at the soldier.

We could not deny the magnetic power of certain animals. Wasn't there a mystery in the fact that two living beings can link their lives on the exchange of a single glance?

Day came at last, light brought out the white walls, cut the silhouettes of the sentries sharply against the paling sky. The bugle sounded.

Familiar sounds started, filled the yard, calls, shouts, the slamming of doors and even laughter. The sun had reappeared and would soon chase away the demons of darkness. The bugle rang a second time, mustering the men. The black soldiers lined up their naked feet on two rows and Master-Sergeant Diallo called to roll. No one was missing.

"Get Hamamma," ordered the officer brusquely.

The old sorcerer appeared between two tall Senegalese. He was humble, hung his head. He shivered before those lines of mute soldiers, whose formation seemed that of an execution squad.

"Spare me, do not kill me, lord," he begged, throwing himself at the lieutenant's feet.

"There is no question of shooting you," the Frenchman replied, "but you're leaving this post at once. You hit the trail. If you run into a caravan, it's good for you. If not, you know what to expect—" Hamamma must know—a lone man cannot survive long in the Sahara. "Well, run your chance. Go on, beat it."

Not a muscle stirred in the faces of the Negro soldiers. They looked fixedly at their chief as if to tell him he had judged right. So Hamamma understood it was no use protesting or pleading. He rose, lifted his pack to his shoulders and headed for the open gate. He walked out into the desert, already crushed under mad light and heat.

The lieutenant faced his men and ordered: " 'Shun!"

The *tirailleurs* obeyed with a snap, once more under the sway of their chief's voice after their long doubt and anxiety. But it was not quite over, for they stirred perceptively when they heard from outside a thin and lively melody, a tune airy and sharp with capricious modulation: the flute.

What followed was strange yet natural. At the call of his master, the cobra, who had taken refuge in a hole somewhere, suddenly appeared on one of the dividing walls. His head rose high, proud and defiant, swelling like an immense black and yellow flower, flooded by the light of the morning sun, shimmering and sparkling with specks of gold. He started to sway, timing himself to the wail of the remote instrument.

A second, two seconds, then came the slap of a detonation. The nearest sentry had fired. Struck in the head, the cobra collapsed, writhed, then dropped to the yard.

At that exact moment, the door of the infirmary opened, and Salem came out, delivered from the spell, grinning with all his white teeth agleam in his good-natured Bambara face.

"What's going on?" he shouted.

He was cured.

COWPUNCHING

ILLUSTRATED BY
NICK EGGENHOFER

The "sea-going" cowboys of Hawaii drive their herds into deep water to load them on inter-island boats.

IN PARADISE

By NAT McKELVEY

WHEN, on February 14, 1793, Captain George Vancouver landed a few cattle in Hawaii, he started something. Today, roughly one third of the four million acre land surface of the Islands is devoted to raising beef. On the high and lowlands of this Pacific paradise fatten 130,000 Herefords valued at more than $12,000,000. Cattle raising is second only to sugar cane as a major Hawaiian industry.

The Dutchman, Captain Vancouver, on a British commission of exploration, put into the port of Kailua on the west coast of Hawaii, largest island of the group. To

A FACT STORY

King Kamehameha I, the captain presented a goodwill offering, the first bull and cow ever to set foot in Hawaii.

Overjoyed, Kamahameha bestowed on Vancouver four feather helmets, a litter of pigs and a gargantuan supply of native fruits and vegetables. The king's kindness called for a "Set 'em up again, bartender" from Vancouver. He gave the potentate the balance of stock aboard ship, five cows and three sheep. On January 9, 1794, the doughty captain landed more livestock in Hawaii.

From the beginning, King Kamehameha protected his Longhorn herds by placing on them an unbreakable *tabu*. Death was punishment for the islander who dared molest the king's cattle. For thirty years, these "sacred cows" freely wandered the Waimea plains and the three mountains of Hawaii, multiplying until the number of wild cattle was reckoned in the tens of thousands.

During the period of *tabu*, wild cattle became so numerous as to constitute a menace to the food supply of the Islanders. Herds indiscriminately trampled cane fields and plots of *poi* and *taro*. Natives of the Kona coast on Hawaii and on the Honolulu highlands below Pali on Oahu banded together to combat the nuisance. Called the *pa sina*, a great stone wall six feet thick and shoulder high was built from Napoopoo ten miles to Hookena on the island of Hawaii. This stopped the westward flow of the wild ones.

Strangely, it was a New England sailor who brought about the beginning of the end of *tabu*. In 1818, King Kamehameha granted to John P. Parker the right to ranch wild cattle. From this simple endowment, the Parker interests have grown until today they represent a ranching empire of 35,000 acres, largest in the eight islands of Hawaii. Parker cattle range from sea level to the picturesque slopes of Mauna Kea, 7,500 feet above the warm Pacific.

AS THE Parker ranch prospered, original wild Longhorn stock gave way to blooded Herefords, the best in beef cattle, brought in from the middlewestern United States. During the last forty-five years, only registered bulls have sired calves on Parker range. Following the Herefords, Parker stocked his horse *remudas* with Thoroughbreds from Kentucky. His is one of the few ranches in the world where cowhands perform their multiple chores aboard the hurricane deck of a hot-blood.

Naturally, the Parker ranch does not compare in size with such vast American *ranchos* as the million and a half acre King Ranch in Texas. The Parker domain is to the King empire approximately as Hawaiian beef raising is to beef raising on the mainland. Whereas Hawaii's 130,000 beef cattle produce 15,000,000 pounds of dressed beef annually, the nearly 80,000,000 cattle in the United States yield about ten billion pounds.

From the island of Hawaii, the original Longhorns spread to other islands in the group. In 1840, Paul Marin ran wild cattle on his ranch in the Waianae region of Oahu, the island on which is situated Honolulu, Diamond Head, Waikiki Beach and other landmarks familiar to tourists. Hawaiian archives also refer to cattle leases at Wailuku, Maui in 1845, and to sale of government cattle on Kauai in 1847. Today, every one of the eight islands boasts a cattle ranch: Hawaii, with fifteen ranches and 889,023 acres of range, leading.

In Hawaii, the cowboy tradition sprang, logically enough, from the mainland. Just as the first Hawaiian cattle came from California, the first cowboys to work them were Mexican punchers from the same state. Under tutelage of the hard riding, fast shooting, quick roping Mexicans, who came to Hawaii one hundred years ago, the native *wahinis*, natural athletes, soon mastered ranching techniques.

In their more leisurely moments, when they have time to be picturesque, modern Hawaiian cowhands wear *leis* of flowers in their hatbands and carry a ukelele or steel guitar at their saddlebow. In this they differ only slightly from cowpokes of the American West where the hatband may be a snakeskin and the musical instrument a Spanish guitar.

Instead of nasally singing "Strawberry Roan" or "Bury Me Not On The Lone Prairie," the Hawaiian cowboy, his voice soft and mellow, hums native tunes. He sings of great mountains where cattle graze, or of the sea, the winds, and the flowers.

Roundup in Hawaii is much like that

in the Southwestern United States—the goal the same, the problems the same. The *Kamaiina rancheros* of the Parker outfit breed bulls, spay cows, brand calves with the best of American tophands. But progress has eradicated one of the most picturesque of island cattle customs. In the old days, Hawaiian punchers used to drive herds into deep water to load them on inter-island boats. At that time, a cattle drive called for all the skill of the dry-land cowboy plus the swimming excellence inherent in Hawaiian men. Naturally, Hawaiian saddle hands became world renowned as "sea-going" cowboys.

In 1850, the storied Longhorn began to disappear from the islands. To supplant him, ranchers turned predominantly to the Hereford and to a lesser degree to the Aberdeen-Angus and Shorthorn. During this period, beef prices fluctuated so violently that, in order to survive, Hawaiian cattlemen frequently had to slaughter their stock for hides and tallow.

But, in 1898, when the United States annexed the Islands, conditions bettered for the insular cattle industry. Depleted ranges were given a shot in the arm by importation of grass seed from the mainland and from a dozen foreign countries. Today, Hawaiians boast that no state in the Union has a greater variety of grass than grows in the Territory.

Islanders also declare that Hawaiian cattle never take a drink of water. Mist drifted into the mountain valleys by trade winds and the natural moisture in grass and in air eliminate to some extent the necessity for water in its usual form. Even so, water has been brought, at considerable expense, from distant mountains to lowland pastures.

HAWAII is the sole customer for Hawaiian beef. Every steak, chop, and roast that Island ranchers can produce finds its way onto Island tables. In fact, beef consumption exceeds production by almost 8,500,000 pounds a year, making imports necessary.

From the inception of the Island beef industry, cattle have been shipped directly from grazing acreage to market without pen-feeding as is practiced in the United States. But at last, in order to combat the inequality between production and consumption, Hawaiian ranchers, under supervision of the Hawaiian Agricultural Experiment Station, are trying supplementary feeding.

Yet, because of excessive price and scarcity, corn-feeding of cattle in Hawaii is impractical. Logically, ranchers turn to those feeds that Hawaii abundantly produces, cane molasses and pineapple bran. As a by-product of the cane industry, molasses is so plentiful that "if all beef cattle and other livestock were fed all the molasses they could eat, there would still be ample molasses for other purposes."

One of the principal forages for Hawaiian cattle is a tree-like plant called *koa haole* from which stock eats the leaves and pods. When fed on this plant plus molasses cattle show a higher percentage of dressed meat after slaughter.

The pineapple industry furnishes the by-product known as "pineapple bran." This, largely the outer shell and core of the pineapple, is fed wet as it comes from the cannery. Or it is dried and sold commercially in 100-pound sacks.

Hawaiian cattle have made a significant advance since Captain Vancouver brought the first animals to the Pacific paradise. Even thirty years ago, ranchers had to spend four or five years producing a beef steer dressing out at 500 to 600 pounds. Today, steers of this productivity are grown in two or three years.

Some of the 1,333,333 acres of Hawaiian range are so fouled by lava flow that fifty acres will scarcely maintain one steer. But other acres are so lush that a steer per acre is the rule. For the whole industry, ten acres is average.

Here in these Islands, where a cow is called a "pipiwahine" and cattle are "holoholona," the industry is of major proportions. The eight Islands do no better than the fabulous King empire of Texas where 130,000 head graze on one ranch. But they do produce excellent Herefords which compare favorably with those seen on large mainland ranches.

And atop the lava slopes and crags of Mauna Kea still roams an unkempt herd of wild cattle, last remnant of the once proud band started by Captain George Vancouver. These animals are a living monument to the creation and growth of an industry that brought cowpunching to the Paradise of the Pacific.

ILLUSTRATED BY
PETER KUHLHOFF

By ALLEN RANKIN

MINUTES passed, and then the half hour. The boy sat on the oak stump, his gun longer than himself across his lap, and listened to the still, cathedral-like voice of the waking swamp.

The sun climbed in the sky and the white frost melted in spots where the warmth streamed down. The light seeping down through the forest in golden, fan-like shafts turned to bright silver. It touched the face of the still black pond near the stump, and, refracting, sent curlycues of light swimming up into the low-hanging bows like schools of silver trout going upstream.

Lewis strained his ears and every nerve within him for the sound of the coming deer. He heard every sound of the waking wood: the ticking of the damp old trees as they warmed and spread themselves to the sun; the chittering of the squirrels which stole down the trunks unaware of his presence; the cries of the yellowhammers flashing overhead in the gaps of sky above where the sun shone solidly.

He sat there and waited and waited. It wasn't as he had always imagined a real

"Wait now," Mr. McCalleb shouted. "Don't shoot yet. We got plenty time. We'll tire him out a little!"

deer hunt would be. It wasn't like Pop, his father, had taught him to hunt them, stalking through the woods with a rifle, giving the deer a running chance. He glanced down at the gun they had given him to shoot—not a rifle but a shotgun, a big 12-gauge which shot not one ball like a rifle but a great spread of buckshot which sprayed out over an area big as a wagon body. He should certainly be able to hit a deer if it came within range.

It seemed a little unfair, too, just to sit hidden in the swamp and let the drivers—hired loggers and Negroes and guides—drive the deer to you. But then the main thing was to get a deer. His cousin Buddy had gotten his first one on the hunt here last week. It had been enough to make Lewis sick the way they'd made on over Buddy's first deer when he'd brought it down the river in the boat last Thursday—sick with envy. Buddy was always ahead of him in everything but school, which didn't count. Buddy smoked real burly while he only smoked rabbit tobacco. He went with grown-up girls like Susie Maddox, when his father wouldn't let him. And now in the eyes of the swamp people he had become a full-fledged hunter, a man, by killing his first deer ahead of Lewis.

That was why Lewis had begged Uncle Ephraim to let him come along today on the hunt. Pop's kind of hunting was fun, sure. It was sporting, sure, trying to walk up on a deer and give him a running chance. But Lewis was tired of always coming back without his buck or without even getting a shot at him. He was tired of his father's excuses, too. "Well," Pop always drawled when they kidded him about not getting deer like Uncle Ephraim, "I reckon the cussed things have just got more sense than I've got. I reckon when I give 'em half a chance they just get away."

It was getting the deer that mattered now and mounting its head as Buddy was having his mounted and having people come by and brag on you like they bragged on Buddy. "Well, boy, I reckon you sho' stopped him in his tracks, all right."

The drivers started now. He heard their shouts as a mile away they started toward the line of guns that he and Buddy and Uncle Ephraim and the rest of the hunters made as they strung out along the shoreline of Little Green Gut Lake. They shouted, "Ya-hoop! Yah-hoo-oo!" Their shouts would drive any deer in the swamp toward the line of guns, maybe toward his very stand. He tingled with the thought of it and fidgeted with the safety under his trigger.

He wondered uneasily why Pop had refused to come along. "Come on with us, Pop," he had said, his eyes missing Pop's steady gaze and dropping to the floor. Pop had looked at him funny as he left, as if he were going away not just for the day, but for a long time.

"Nope, son," he'd said very slowly, "I just don't think I could hit any of your Uncle Ephraim's big, fast swamp deer. I just don't think I could get a bead on 'em."

"But why?" Lewis had said. And since Pop hadn't answered, he was still wondering. If Pop couldn't get his bead on a deer, Pop who could hit the fastest flying quail blurring up even in broken timber where he had to snap him down between trees, then maybe—maybe he would miss a deer, too. Perspiration broke out on his forehead. He just couldn't miss, that was all. He couldn't afford to miss and be shown up before Buddy and the rest.

He glanced at Buddy standing against a sycamore seventy-five yards from him. He felt the tug of jealousy at his heart. Buddy had his father's mane of red hair, his high, raw cheekbones, his eyes cold and green as lakewater in winter, eyes that could look a man through or look a man down. Lewis was just fifteen but old enough to know he would never grow into the big man Buddy would. His frame, small and slight like his father's, was beginning to shiver with cold. His blue eyes, like his father's, mild and a little startled when he didn't wear his glasses, were misting already.

Still, all his life he had hunted, building up to just this day. He could shoot as well as Buddy and he knew it. But the other men didn't. He would have to show them, that's all. He'd have to get his buck if it killed him.

THE drivers were coming closer now and along with their shouts he could hear the frenzied baying of the hounds. "Yoop-yoop-yoop!" bayed the fine-voiced hounds, and

the deep, gross-voiced hounds went, "Who-yawp! Who-yawp!" They were closing in, getting louder and clearer. They were on the scent.

Suddenly Lewis froze. The sound was like that of a spread of light gravel thrown across dry leaves, but he knew what he heard was a deer, a deer racing swiftly toward him through the swamp. The rustling stopped as the deer paused to sniff the air and blow in angry confusion.

Just in this second he saw the deer, a dappled brown thing as flashing and quick and blended with the wild woods as the quiverings of the sun through the leaves. It had seen him and was veering away, antlers thrown high, white rump flashing like a light, pivoting through the trees with more ease than a broken-field runner.

Lewis held his breath, wheeled with the deer. The safety clicked off. The receding rump was in his sights. Then just as he was about to pull the trigger he remembered Buddy. Buddy was directly in line with his sights. He couldn't shoot; he might hit him.

Desperation seized him and tears welled to his eyes. Buddy would get the shot now. It seemed too unfair. The deer raced straight for Buddy's stand. Lewis watched fascinated. In another moment the deer would have run Buddy down. It was practically on top of him when it sniffed, stopped statue still and cocked its ears to listen.

It was then that Buddy shot.

"Whoom!" With the first shot the buck reared on its hind legs, beat its hooves wildly at the sky. *"Whoom!"* It went down on its knees. Buddy's gun was blasting into its side at a distance of not more than twenty feet. You could hear the big shotgun kick back with the power of the load.

"Whoom!" On that last shot Buddy stepped from behind the tree where he was hidden, and thrust his barrel almost within striking distance of the deer. The buck crumpled, turned on its side, kicked and lay still.

Buddy shouted in delight, "I got him! I got him! I got my second!" The shouts went bouncing and rollicking around the woods. Down the line, two similar groups of shots boomed out. The hollering meant that two more deer had been killed. The sudden quiet meant that the morning's drive was over.

"Come help me!" Buddy was shouting. It aroused Lewis from a daze. A hard knot was twisting in his stomach. He swallowed. For some reason—buck fever, perhaps—he had stood stupefied in the second when he might have shot the deer himself. It was carefulness that had prevented him from taking the shot later, but whatever the reason that had caused it, he had missed. And Buddy had gotten his second buck.

"Hey, why didn't you shoot him?" said Buddy jubilantly as he approached.

Looking at the fallen animal, the smooth sheen of its beautiful brown-dappled hide gleaming in the sunlight, the wide-spread curling antlers above its glazing eyes, Lewis said flatly, "I was afraid I'd hit you."

"Huh!" grunted Buddy derisively. "Here, help me cut a pole."

They hacked down a young elm with Buddy's knife. They stripped the branches from it, and when it was a good carrying pole, they slipped it through the natural sinewy slits which nature had made so conveniently just above the deer's hooves.

"Twenty-six points on those antlers," Buddy gloated. "Bigger than my last one. I wish I'd had *him* mounted instead."

"Yeah," said Lewis.

"Must weigh two-thirty if he weighs an ounce."

"Yeah," said Lewis dumbly. He felt a little sick. The other men began to come up and kid him. They came out of the woods carrying their own kills on poles. Uncle Ephraim hadn't gotten one and so he gloated on his son Buddy's.

"Don't tell me you let Buddy outshoot you," he joshed Lewis. "You've got to get a buck, you know. It takes at least one buck for a man to grow up on."

Somebody else said, "Yeah, Lewis, boy. You got to do better this afternoon. We don't want to have to be cutting your shirt tail off tonight."

They were kidding him, all right, but it was hard kidding to take. It had been hard to live with Buddy before; it would be unbearable now. Besides, Lewis was losing his confidence, even about the afternoon drive to come. As he helped Buddy and some of the other men shoulder the pole and carry the deer from the swamp, he almost wished he hadn't come.

He almost wished he were out hunting today with Pop.

The men must have seen he was near tears by the time they got back to the pine camping shack. They began to encourage him at lunch. "You'll do all right, boy," they told him. "Just get in there this afternoon and keep pitching."

By three o'clock Uncle Ephraim was leaving him on the same stand where he would have his second and last chance.

"Just keep your eyes open, now," he said, "and when the drivers begin coming through again, let fly at anything that's got horns on it." Uncle Ephraim left him with a grin. "That is, anything with horns on it but Old Whitey, boy. Don't you be shoot'n Old Whitey and showing us all up.'"

He was still kidding. He didn't expect Lewis to shoot anything, much less Old Whitey. Every deer hunter in South Alabama knew about Old Whitey. He was the tremendous white buck that had been jinxing even the wisest hunters for years. A hundred pairs of eyes had seen Old Whitey, but few had got a shot at him and those few had missed. Old Whitey was a freak, snow-white among the dappled brown deer, and he had been endowed, as freak animals often are, with a genius for self-preservation.

"If you shoot Old Whitey, boy," beamed Uncle Ephraim, "lemme know," and with his powerful, quiet stride he was gone.

LEWIS heard the drivers start again. He heard their shouting begin and he heard his heart begin to beat loudly and make the shouting sound dim and faraway. He wanted to get a buck like Buddy, didn't he? Then why did he feel so confused about things? Why was his confidence gone? Why did he feel so weak in the knees? If he were going to prove that he was a man . . . He clutched his gun and waited.

He looked up suddenly and saw the little man. He didn't know how long he had been standing there, only that he must have been standing beside him and watching him for some time with his yellow glowing eyes.

"You ain't had much luck today."

"No," said Lewis, blinking, "I haven't." He recognized the man now. He was small and tight packed, with a big mouth and a brush of yellow whiskers and a sharp, keen nose all pushed together into one small space like the face of a coon. But his eyes were like a fox's, that same slow-burning yellow. He was Asa McCalleb, the professional guide for the hunt. Lewis had not seen him since morning when he had gone down the river with the drivers.

"Not much luck, Mr. McCalleb," he said uneasily. It occured to him that Uncle Ephraim may have sent Asa McCalleb to help him.

"Come with me," said Asa McCalleb softly and when Lewis hesitated, "Come ahead. I think maybe I can help you get a shot."

Lewis followed wonderingly. He noticed that even though Mr. McCalleb wore clumsy turned-down hip boots over his muddy, nonedescript clothes, he moved through the dry leaves soundlessly, without a rustle. He watched the swivel-like motion of Mr. McCalleb's gimpy left leg limping in front of him and knew that he was hunting with one of the deadliest little guides in the big swamp, a hunter to whom even Uncle Ephraim admitted inferiority. He had heard Uncle Ephraim tell about how Asa McCalleb helped rich city men kill buck, and now he was going to help him.

"I reckon I can help you get your first 'un," he said chuckling. "I have to help 'em all out every now and then. I helped your cousin Buddy get his'n the other day."

"You did?" said Lewis. "You did?" Very vaguely he began to understand.

The drivers and the dogs were close now. They were making an awful hooting and yawping. Even Lewis could tell they were converging on the little peninsular of swamp which thrust itself like a crooked leg into the still, deep water of Little Green Gut Lake. He and Mr. McCalleb came abruptly on the object which lay hidden close under the willows at the lake's edge. A boat.

"I keep it here for emergencies," apologized Mr. McCalleb. He winked. "They do come up sometimes, you know. Get in, son."

"Yeah," said Lewis, "but I thought it was against the law. A fast motorboat. I . . ."

Mr. McCalleb's wise little face crinkled

in the fox-like smile. "Ever stop to think how far back in the swamp we are? Reckon anybody'd ever find us?" He slipped the bow chain free of the brown cyprus knee. "Hop in if you gonna. We got to get going quick."

As the motor roared Lewis, shading his eyes up the lake, saw a splash at the end of the neck of land, then another and another. The splashes were deer. Surrounded by the closing dogs and men, they were springing their trap by swimming the lake.

Mr. McCalleb cut back the motor quietly until they had gotten well from the shore. Then he gunned it, ramming the boat forward to bear down on them.

"Now we got 'em!" he shouted. "Jus' take your time and wait till I tell you to shoot."

Lewis readied himself in the bow, the gun held loaded and cocked on his lap. His heart was beating wildly. The boat bore down easily on the deer, and the three black specks in the lake took shape. There were two bucks and a doe.

Then it was that Mr. McCalleb went beside himself, throwing his hands over his head, pointing and gesticulating.

"Godamighty, boy!" he shouted. "Look what we gonna get! Look what we got! We'll have something to show 'em back at camp tonight all right!"

Lewis' eyes bulged. The buck lurching and foaming away from the others was a giant of his kind, a bearer of a patriarchal set of antlers with a spread like an oak and with a forest of points. But the main thing about him, he saw with his heart in his throat, was that the buck was snow white. He was Old Whitey!

"Wait now," Mr. McCalleb shouted. "Don't shoot yet. We got plenty time. We'll tire him out a little!"

THEY circled with the boat and the buck plunged in another direction, began to make circles, too. Its liquid eyes bulged stem-like, its nostrils dilated. It ploughed the green water with flashing, powerful legs which sent it lunging halfway out of the water as though it would stand up in the water and run on it. A thrill went through Lewis with the presence of so wild a thing so close within his reach.

"Don't shoot yet!" yelled Mr. McCalleb. "He's going to the bank, hell nor high water! Let him get there before you shoot. He'll sink if you shoot him in the lake. And this is one baby we don't want to sink." He grinned at Lewis reassuringly. "Don't worry. I'll keep him close."

As in a dream Lewis clicked off his safety. Old Whitey was making it in to the bank now and they were following at less than thirty feet. Lewis clicked his safety again, unclicked it, waiting for the shot. His mind was an agony of confusion. Suppose he should muff this chance? Suppose the deer should get away? He knew what the men would say. He felt his knees go weak and his head swimming.

"Ready?" said Mr. McCalleb. "All set?"

"All set," said Lewis. He was surprised at the thinness of his own voice.

Looking back on it, that night and always, he saw the quick scene in a blur. The buck's white head cleaving the green lake. The head rising as the deer's hooves plowed solid ground. Again he leveled his gun and drew his bead in rushed panic as Mr. McCalleb yelled, "Shoot! Shoot!" and the buck with a great rippling of his white shoulders plunged up the slippery bank.

He shot.

"Whoom!" The deer stumbled on the green slime of the bank. *"Whoom!"* It darted crazily sidewise, taking another course. *"Whoom!"* With a white flash the deer's rump disappeared over the top of the bank. That was three shots—all the pump's magazine held. Lewis was left sillily holding the empty gun to his shoulder.

Mr. McCalleb, who had risen in his excitement, sank slowly down on the seat of the boat. He took off his battered hat, slapped his forehead, sighed.

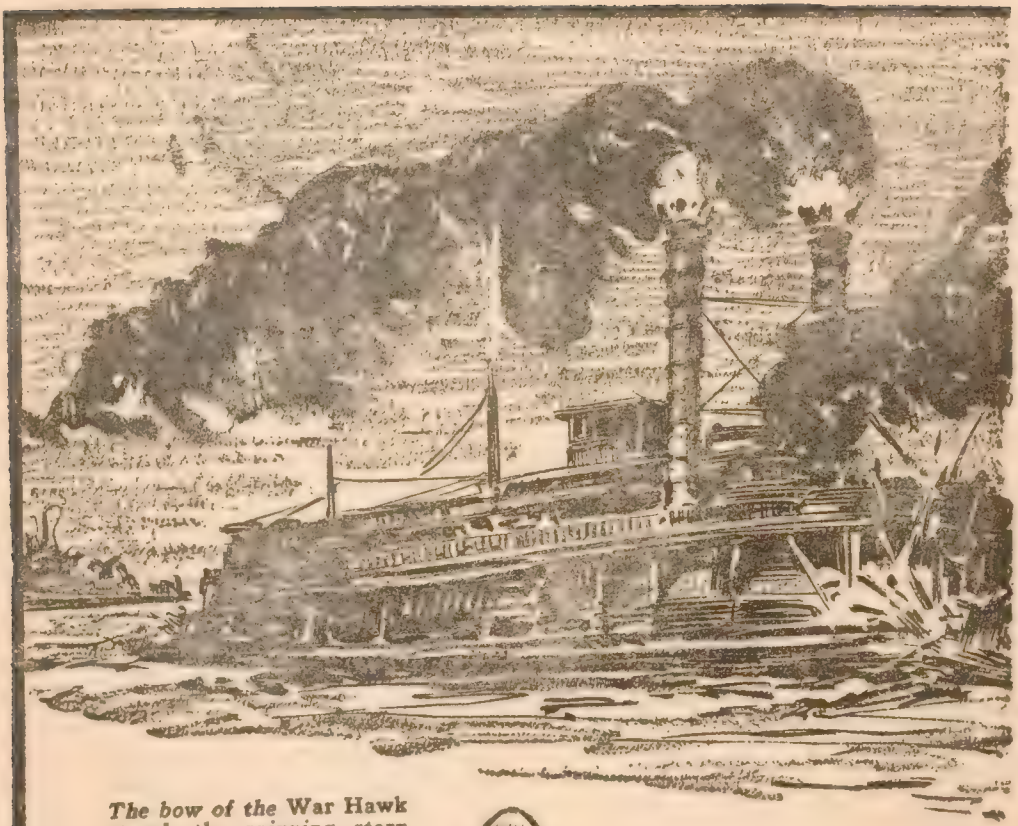
"Godamighty, boy!" he almost whispered at last, "you missed 'im!" He said it almost with disbelief.

After a spell of shaking his head and muttering to himself he said, "I just wish now you'd given me the gun. Ain't no hunter alive who'll ever get a shot at Old Whitey again, or probably ever see 'im."

"You reckon?" said Lewis.

"They're gonna give you hell, all right, when they hear about this."

(Continued on page 146)



The bow of the **War Hawk** *struck the spinning stern wheel of her rival—like a buzz saw chewing into a log.*

PRAIRIE PADDLES

By CARL D. LANE

THE STORY THUS FAR:

ALL the way from Covington to the Niobrara, the Upper Missouri valley is a trouble-ridden frontier—teeming with river pirates, waterfront scum burned out of Natchez-under-the-Hill, crooked Indian agents—but to HAINES BUTLER, pilot of the *Cheyenne Belle*, the murderous river life is all in the day's work till his cub, GIL NASH, whom Butler is training as a pilot, is needlessly killed in a clash with TWO KETTLES and his Blackfeet braves. After the death of Gil—brother of BEAUMELLE NASH, whom Butler still loves although she is promised to TELFER DOANE, a St. Joseph insurance agent—Butler vows to clean out the lawless river gangs whose systematic robbing of the redskins threatens to precipitate a bloody Indian War.

After conferring with EAMES HARRIS, owner of the *Cheyenne Belle* and several other river packets, and DANIEL PECK, Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Butler quits Harris' employ, on the pretext of dissatisfaction—actually to seek a job as pilot with Harris' rival, AMOS TABOR. Butler suspects that Tabor may be the brains behind the conspiracy to defraud the Indians of goods rightfully theirs under their treaty with the Government. Accompanied by his friend LOUIS SAC, a halfbreed hunter who has promised his help, Butler goes to Covington—"wickedest town in America"—where he finds MILO DUTTON, pilot of Tabor's *War Hawk*,

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KRAMER

and requests permission to go upriver with him as an "observer." Dutton, fearing Butler is after his job, consents reluctantly. Aboard the *War Hawk,* Butler tells Tabor he has quit Harris. Tabor needs a skilled pilot but he is suspicious of Butler's break with Harris. To test him, he dares Butler to take the wheel of the *War Hawk* and race Harris' boat, the *Dakota,* to Vermillion. Butler accepts the challenge. . .

PART II

HE WAS not at all sure that he could catch the *Dakota.* Sam Patten was a fast wheeler and his boat as good as ever came out of the Jeffersonville yards. But the licking itself did not matter. Tabor might be satisfied with only his effort, and that Haines honestly made.

The sun dropped low over the flat treeless prairie to larboard and the sudden breeze heralded the cool plains night to come. Far ahead, beyond a stand of bronze cliffs, Haines could see the winding river canyon which led to the post village of Vermillion. He guessed that the troops there, smoking their after-dinner cheroots on the ramparts of the earthwork fort, would already be speculating upon the distant racing clouds of smoke.

Amos had broached his second quart of whiskey and was in a jovial mood. He did not spare Dutton but, as the liquor spoke, ragged him about Butler's fine show of piloting. "I've seen you duck that snag in Mint Run like it was yellow jack many a time, Milo," he goaded. "Butler, he ran right over it, did you see? Piloting, Milo—that's piloting. He saved us half a mile. How's the *Dakota* bear now?"

"A mile ahead," Dutton growled. "We won't catch her."

"He's like a kid with candy took from him," Amos grinned. "Go ahead, Butler—use up all my resin, but lick that Eames Harris' basket!"

Haines knew no more tricks of speed that he could safely employ, but calling forth all his river sense, he cut the bends under the bronze bluffs and put the big packet over sand bottom only a foot below the flat hull. In fifteen minutes, the stacks belching the dirty ochre smoke of resin chunks, he could feel the roily wake of the *Dakota* in his straining rudder tackles. On the forward deck, the Negroes were crying a jubilee song and the big mate was trying to throw boiler rivets to the deck of the fleeing *Dakota.*

Amos sucked deep from his bottle. "He done it! Ally Reegan put a rivet clean through her stern window, by God!"

Haines could feel the thrill of the race course through his body, like a trickle of whiskey in an empty belly. He marveled at Amos Tabor. The race had caught something deep and genuine in the man and his excitement and will to win stood on him as a strong wish stands on a determined child. It made Haines additionally wary. Tabor was more than a river toughy, by chance operating from a steamboat instead of a horse. He knew his boat—like a highwayman must know his steed. Daniel Peck, Haines thought, would have said something like that.

"Vermillion fair ahead!"

With the lookout's call, Haines knew that he could not beat the *Dakota.* He felt disappointment strong and bitter in Tabor also. Perhaps the man would take his effort alone as proof but Haines sensed that it was a half victory; that he could not sweep as fully into Tabor's confidence as he wished. Haines gripped his wheel spokes hard. He had three miles yet—and a lot could happen in three miles if you abandoned fair play—and sanity.

"She's got me sore, Amos," Butler said, "and she's hurting my reputation. Yours too. I know one more trick."

Amos was sobering now, his eyes suddenly blaming Butler. "You said you could lick her, Butler," he said without friendliness. "What's your trick? It better be good."

"We're losing good steam through the safety valves. Tell your striker to hang an anvil on their chains."

"You'll blow my boilers, man."

"Suit yourself, Tabor," Haines said softly. "I tried."

Tabor's answer was to flip open the speaking tube. He growled into it and Haines heard the engineer shut off the safety valves; then the sudden ominous beat of increased steam pressure against the pistons. The paddle was spinning like the wheel of a stagecoach on its last mile and shook the packet in a trembling surging rhythm. Haines fought his bow up to the paddle of the *Dakota,* breasting the churning wheel. Tabor, excited, called for still more pressure. The boiler

doors clanged and the steam lines, red hot, scorched adjacent woodwork until they required wetting down by the fire detail. But the *War Hawk* could gain no more.

Below him, Haines saw the deck clear of cheering Negroes as the *Dakota's* paddle cascaded water over it. The troopers were gathered at the Vermillion waterfront now. Some fool was shooting a rifle into the air and the brigade bugler blew long derisive blasts on his horn. Above the furious chuffing of the two boats, Haines suddenly heard a loud cheer for the *Dakota*. It angered Amos Tabor and he snarled, "Do we do it, Butler?"

Butler pressed his lips tight and nodded.

With a quick heave Haines planted a foot on the wheel spoke and bore down. The big wheel spun slowly, and obediently the *War Hawk* veered toward the quarter of the flying *Dakota*. Dutton blanched. "By God, you're going to ram her!"

"Don't be a fool," Butler grated. "Just nick her paddle."

As he spoke, the flat bow of the *War Hawk* struck the spinning stern wheel of her rival. It sounded, for a moment, like a buzz saw chewing into a log—then a hail of splinters from the shattered paddle buckets filled the air and Butler swung his packet again on her course. Tabor whooped and took a long pull from his bottle. "See, Milo," he croaked. "That's piloting!"

Dutton dabbed at his face with a silk handkerchief, his face black with shock and anger. "Dirty!" he said. "I wouldn't do anything like that."

Tabor guffawed. "You mean you couldn't!"

They were drawing ahead of the crippled, slowing *Dakota* now. Haines, ears shut, avoided the outraged cursing of Sam Patten. Only Eames Harris would understand why he had had to do this. In minutes, they were well ahead of the *Dakota* and Butler sent his slow bell down to the engineer. "Get those anvils off the safeties, Amos," he said. "I don't want to push my luck."

"You're a cool devil, Butler!"

"It was an accident," Haines chuckled. "I was scared as hell, honest— My! The way this boat sheared 'round when the *Dakota's* wake hit her. I hope it doesn't discourage Harris. Where do you want her, Amos?"

"Beside the warehouse. This ought to signify to Eames Harris. Butler, you were talking straight, I reckon. Eight hundred a month is cheap for a fighting pilot. See me later, will you?"

Haines nestled the *War Hawk* into her berth. It was growing dark now with the purple twilight a smudge beyond Vermillion and the gate lights of the fort were winking like early stars. He rang down "finished with engines" and put the wheel in a becket. Beside him, Dutton was impotent with rage and Haines could almost taste the man's wild bitter hatred.

"Dirty!" Dutton gritted. "Damn dirty dog. . ."

Haines wheeled sharply. "Easy, Dutton," he rasped. "I don't provoke either. I told you Amos would hire his own pilots."

He left the wheelhouse then, pausing to breathe the sweet prairie smells as if they were utterly strange to him. In a way, they were. In the wheelhouse there had been nothing but the smell of hot oil and resin smoke and whiskey; and Milo Dutton's fierce hatred. Haines should have remembered one of those smells. . .

The roustabouts were lining up at the galley slide for their standard ration of buffalo stew, army bread and tea. In the main saloon, where he would dine, the mates and clerks and engineers were already answering the call of the cook's triangle. Haines, not liking it, but realizing that for awhile he must be part of them, started down the steep stair from the texas. He was halfway down when a shot rang out behind him. Three inches from his guiding fingers, the oak rail exploded into splinters and a slug ricocheted into the gloom.

Butler's hand darted to his holster as he whirled and crouched. From behind the stair riser which he placed between himself and the source of the shot, he saw Milo Dutton in the port window of the wheelhouse. Dutton's smoking gun was dropping from its recoil, again seeking its target. Haines tried to duck. But the stair riser was low and narrow and little protection. Then Haines fired.

He saw the pilot's gun pause and waver. A surprised look erased the bitter

scowl from Dutton's face. The gun went off into the air and, with a tired sigh, Milo Dutton collapsed.

The big mate, Reegan, clambered past him, two steps at a time. "I saw it, Mr. Butler. The damn fool! He'd shoot a man in the back!"

Haines stood aside as the crew poured aloft to the wheelhouse. He had no wish to see for himself. Tabor hailed him: "They say he's dead, Butler."

"I shot to kill," Haines said and sheathed his gun.

Amos whistled and Haines caught again the heavy whiskey on his breath. "You want that job pretty bad, eh?"

Haines did not answer. They studied each other for a long moment, Tabor rocking on his heels. Butler was smart, he thought, smart and cool. The law

Dutton's smoking gun was dropping from its recoil, again seeking its target.

could not touch him about this. Amos could always use a smart and cool man.

"I wanted to see you," he finally said. "Why not now?"

"Why not? But it's got to be eight hundred a month."

"Fair enough. Do you know the upper river?"

Haines grinned thinly. "What do you think?"

Amos laughed. "All right, Butler. I was just worried that you might still be opening up the river for Eames Harris. We leave for Yankton at daybreak. Just one thing—don't try to do my thinking for me. That's all I had against Milo there."

CHAPTER V

RED ROSES AND DEATH

TELFER DOANE never called at the Cordellier Undertaking Parlors in St. Joseph without succumbing to a queer feeling in his belly. He had called often in the last four and a half months; at least once each week. But he never lost that feeling. He had even felt it when, two weeks ago, he had sat in the quiet chapel with Beaumelle Nash and her sister, Esther, her brother-in-law, Captain La Touche, of the *Cheyenne Belle* and Eames Harris. Little Gil had looked sweet and innocent in his simple coffin, sweet and cold and terribly alone. Even then, with Pastor Krantz, of the new Lutheran Church on Prairie Avenue, saying his measured, solemn words, Telfer had slipped a hand to his belt and tightened it against that queer belly feeling. *It could be me,* he thought. *It could be me, lying there, with people crying over me and a holy man praying for my eternal soul!*

But in his heart he knew that he would never lie in the still peace of a funeral parlor. And people would not cry. And the prayers would be useless. When he died, it would be with his boots on, perhaps on some canyon trail, or alone in his office in the Bijou Hotel. Tiny Beldon's men would be careful not to be seen, of course, and would never be found. But his books would tell the story. Already there was an insurance investigator working some place on the river. Atlas and Eastern Casualty and Risk were suspicious; hence their operative—and it was significant that Doane did not know the man's name or plan of search.

Tonight, waiting for Mr. Cordellier, he felt that tightening in his stomach again and was suddenly aware that he felt it always; that it had not left him in the months since he had told Beldon that he was going to quit. Beldon—small, weasel-faced, his thin womanish fingers massaging his hairless chin, had laughed openly at him. "Quit," he had said. "Doane, how can you?"

That's all that Beldon had said; not another word, not even when Doane had sent back to him some expired freight theft policies with the penciled notation that he would not re-write the business. It was that which lay on his belly; the silence, the waiting, the awful suspense of wanting to know what Tiny Beldon would do to him for quitting.

Doane had tried to make a clean break from that past which Beldon had thrust upon him. He had done it for Beau. Beau had said yes to him—and from that moment on he had tried to be the upright man his reputation held him to be. Beau Nash was the finest and noblest thing ever to enter his life and he counted his engagement to her a far greater honor than his election as alderman or his leadership of the St. Joseph's Civic Betterment Association and his close, trusted friendship with the greatest men in the growing town, Eames Harris and Mayor Doc Leander. Yes—Telfer Doane had honestly tried to go straight since that day. His money debt to Tiny had been paid long ago. His regular commissions gave him all the means he needed. There was no need to continue his life and his future and his and Beau's happiness in jeopardy—except for the greed of Tiny Beldon. Only now, when it was too late, did he understand the web Beldon had spun about him.

Mr. Cordellier came from the back room with a huge bunch of red roses. "These are as good as ever came up from St. Louis, Mr. Doane," he said and breathed deep of the fragrance which flooded the lamplit little office. "The plants came clear from Lancaster, in Pennsylvania—down the Ohio, I take it—and there's only about three more cuttings this year from them."

"They're beautiful." Telfer nodded in real appreciation. "Send for more plants, please. But have something for me every Saturday night."

Cordellier chuckled. "Fancy—red roses clear out in this country that is still afraid of Indians. She's a very lucky girl, Mr. Doane."

Telfer smiled, pleased. He liked men like Cordellier to credit him with the means and taste to import roses over three hundred miles of winding river and wilting summer heart for his fiancée. It helped to erase that other secret side of himself and his activities. He counted out eighteen dollars to the undertaker.

Cordellier watched him carefully place the roses in his sharp, new buckboard and drive off. A fine young fellow; a coming man, he nodded. Miss Nash was lucky; luckier than she would have been with that lanky, cold-eyed pilot, Haines Butler. Although, he recalled, Butler used to buy her flowers that cost a cool forty dollars a bunch! Lively, lusty young blades, they were—and Cordellier, remembering his own youth in this same Missouri to which his father had brought him over the old Monongahela trace, sighed with tired understanding.

Cordellier busied himself about the shop with sweeping and dusting. Then he hung up the night card and turned down his lamp. There was a meeting of the Board of Aldermen tonight; a special and secret meeting and he was suddenly surprised that Doane had not mentioned it. Doane, an alderman, would be attending, of course. They had Two Kettles in jail and two of his braves lay in the morgue behind him awaiting the sheriff's order to bury them.

Cordellier had thought his days of Indian raids were over. It had been a shock, therefore, when the sheriff had called him out near dawn with the cry of "Blackfeet!" But the raid was all over when he reached the south side. Two Kettle's small band had burned several barns and butchered a cow and a few pigs. The Indians were roaring drunk and had not even run when the sheriff's party had ridden into them with guns blazing. Cordellier had sent his black wagon for the two dead Indians, and returning, stopped to give a lift to a man who had had his horse shot from under him.

"It's not these Indians so much," his guest had growled bitterly. "It's that damn bunch that keeps 'em stirred up. Two Kettles was down this way to take his treaty goods; don't know's I blame him. But they say he was driven off a steam packet and was good and sore and so took it out on St. Jo. I tell you, mister, we ought to let those Blackfeet be and get after Covington."

"There's talk of it, friend," Cordellier told him.

"About time, you ask me!"

"I'm on the Board, friend. I know. Doc Leander is going to do something about it this time. Buffalo Nose burned a steamer at the St. Jo wharf only a month ago. I guess Doc will act this time."

"How do you mean?"

"I can't say yet. But if we need you, the sheriff'll call you, friend."

Yes; they would have to do something about it this time, and so Cordellier allowed that he'd see Telfer Doane later in the evening.

DOANE, too, was thinking about the meeting as he twisted the cast-iron bell turn on the front door of the Nash house on Battery Street. It would break into his evening with Beau and he resented it. Only with Beau had he felt safe and calm lately and he had come to rely upon the quiet moments with her as a sick man comes to rely upon soothing medicines.

Beau opened the door and let him into the carpeted hall with the black walnut stairway reaching into the gloom of the second floor landing. A ruby lamp burned on the newel post and Telfer hung his wide-brimmed hat on the deer antler rack with easy familiarity. He kissed Beau; then stepped back to watch her stand with his roses cradled in her arms.

"They're beautiful, Tel."

"They match," Telfer said, smiling.

He saw a girl of twenty with a strong lithe body faintly high-lighting a tight-waisted brown dress and bodice, medium tall and standing, feet spread, like a man stands but, as always, Doane felt her real strength in her face and eyes. Beau Nash's eyes were a level blue-gray and her face, soft and now stealing deep color from the roses, was square-chinned and firm. There was nothing doll-like about her; when she

moved she moved with sure swift grace and when she spoke her voice was quiet and throaty and her lips did not purse but formed the words over their whole pink width.

Doane was proud of Beau; he was aware of her quiet lovely dignity and sometimes doubted the stories he had heard of her long rough years on the prairies with her parents before Pop Nash had finally moved to St. Jo with his fur-trading profits and sent her to school in Louisville. But he knew that she could ride a pony like a trooper and that she had killed the buck from which his hat hung at this moment.

"I can't stay long, Beau," he said and his arm hooked in hers as they walked into the twilight-flooded parlor. "There's a Board meeting—about that Indian trouble last night. You'll understand, my dear?"

"Of course, Tel. I want you to go. We can't have trouble like that; never any more. I haven't anything further to lose—but others have."

"We'll deal with Two Kettles all right," Telfer promised. "He'll pay for what he did to you, Beau."

"I don't want that," Beau said quickly. "I don't want blood. I want Gil! But I can't have Gil and I can't have my father. Tel, your Board had better get at the real causes. St. Jo won't take another Indian raid."

"Leander is for cleaning out Covington, Beau," Doane said. "There won't be any more trouble if that camp is broken up."

"Who is it up there, Tel? That Amos Tabor and the gang on his boat? Or is there somebody behind him?"

"Somebody behind him, I'm sure," Doane told her. "I—I don't know who, of course."

"You suspect who though, don't you?"

Doane felt uncomfortable. He had never been able to dissemble to Beau. So now he said, "Honestly, I don't know, dear. It could be Tiny Beldon; it could be Stew Harmon. Beau, let's talk about something pleasant."

Doane wanted to talk about their wedding. But he sensed that Beau would not wish to. Outwardly she had been brave and dry-eyed about Little Gil but he knew her well enough to understand that she mourned in her heart, deeply and hurtingly and their wedding could not possibly take place in September as he had hoped. He sincerely wanted to share her hurt but always, when he spoke of her brother, there came between them the shadow of Haines Butler. Doane did not know if Butler had ever asked Beau to marry him. He supposed that he had, for Butler was neither shy nor unaggressive. Telfer always took a satisfaction from his belief that Beau had carefully weighed them both and coolly and deliberately chosen himself.

They talked of inconsequential things in the hour that the room became dark, then Telfer suddenly stood up. "I'll have to go now, Beau."

"Yes, Tel. Whatever you do, do it thoroughly. Listen to Eames Harris. He's so very sound and foresighted. This may mean fighting—and your vigilantes will be called, I suppose. Be careful, Tel."

"I don't like fighting, Beau," he said. "But it's a job that must be done and I'll do my part."

"Of course, you will. You're a brave and good man, Tel."

Telfer made no answer. He was neither. In his heart he knew that and he hated himself for his lack. But he was bound to the path which Tiny Beldon had pointed out and which he had freely taken. With all his being, he wished that he could throw himself at Beau's feet and cry out his fear, his awful inward quaking and upset—like Little Gil used to cry when he came to the only mother he ever knew. But he kissed her now, too quickly and too carelessly, so that he felt the sudden reserve in her body, and let himself out of the door.

HE WAS already in his buckboard, reins in hand, when he noticed the man who held the bridle of the horse. Doane sat perfectly still. He was unarmed, as always when in town, but he felt sudden regret. With a gun in his hand, inexpert that he was, this moment could be the showdown. This moment could rid him, one way or the other, of that awful ache in his belly. But now, amazed at his own calmness, he simply called, "Let go of that horse!"

The man, a dark shadow between the horse and the earth curb, laughed shortly. "Not so fast, mister! I just wanted to be sure you got these."

A bundle of documents fell on the seat

beside him and again the man laughed. "Tiny Beldon says you must have returned them by mistake. They're policies, mister. Tiny wants them rewritten like always."

Telfer gripped the reins hard. "Supposing they're not?"

"Tiny says he will get a different agent —a live one!"

Telfer let that sink in and he was suddenly aware that at last the hurt was easing and that he didn't care which way the moment turned out. He took up the buggy whip and noted that the man moved quickly away, placing the horse between himself and Doane.

"I've got a gun on you, mister," the man said softly.

"Of course you have. Shoot it."

"Only if you make me, mister. Look, don't be a damn fool. Put up that whip. What'll I tell Tiny?"

Doane felt of the package. It contained his policies all right. He had a sudden impulse to throw them into the street. But that would leave him only one course of action—to flee, to leave all that St. Joseph and Beau and his civic position were to him. He counted these things the badge of his successes in life; to him they were all he had to mark his progress of years and he did not want to give them up. He wanted these things—even at the price Tiny Beldon put on them. He said now, "You seem to know Beldon well. How long is he going to hound me?"

Amazed at his own calmness, Doane called, "Let go of that horse!"

"He never set no time limit on it, mister. You and him got into a hole with that mine stock or whatever it was, up to the gulch, and he got you out of it with his money. You ought to be grateful."

"That was a long time ago. I paid him back, ten times over."

The man shrugged. "It ain't my business. I guess Tiny just likes the idea of getting easy money and he don't see no reason to stop just because you got respectable of late. Why don't you play along? Tiny can fix things if you get into trouble."

"He could—in Covington," Telfer admitted. "But St. Jo is my town. Tell Tiny I'll think about it."

"It ain't a safe answer, mister."

"It's all he'll get," Doane snapped. "Now, stand away."

"Sure, sure," the man stepped backward to the earth curb. "I ain't got no orders about the matter yet. But I reckon I'll be seeing you, mister."

"Stand away!"

Telfer clucked to the horse and the buckboard moved into the darkness toward the center of the town. He expected a shot to ring out but, oddly, he made no effort to hide himself and presently he pulled into Main Street, heading west. Here he drew up to let the horse drink at the wooden trough at the hotel coach yard and was suddenly aware that he was damp with perspiration. He mopped his neck while the horse sucked hungrily.

The ache in his belly had returned again. For a bright moment, gripping the buggy whip with intent to lay it on Beldon's gunman, he had felt free of it. But now it beat inside him stronger than before and Doane knew that he would eventually re-write those crooked policies and Beldon would continue to loot the freight shipments. He had missed his chance. He tried to excuse himself, he tried to balance against this one lapse all the virtue and civic accomplishment connected with the name Telfer Doane. It was considerable. It was a proud record. But it must always remain with this one blemish, this bar sinister, which could not be erased except by his blood spilled in an unknown place, at some unknown time.

He turned the rig toward the Court House where the Board of Aldermen had already gathered. Eames Harris and Doc Leander were strong for cleaning out Covington. So was Cordellier, and Mr. Holt. Doane had not expressed his own opinion so far, fearing to tread on Beldon. But as he hitched his horse to the rail, he resolved to do so, in a secret ballot if he could contrive it. If the Board voted to move against Covington, as the Natchez people had moved long ago, would not that rid him of Beldon? Carefully engineered, with Tiny Beldon not merely run off but dead, his trouble would be over. Doane felt new hope as he entered the council chamber.

DOC LEANDER nodded to him from his chair at the head of the long trestle table. "We gave you up and voted, Telfer. We're all for giving Covington ten days to break up camp or ride in on 'em and do it with fire. I presume you are with us?"

Doane nodded. "I'm sorry I'm late. An unavoidable delay, gentlemen."

"Good." Leander blinked through his bushy whiskers. "Now, let's discuss details."

Telfer lit a cigar and leaned back in his chair, well pleased with himself. He had not voted but they had taken his apology for tardiness as agreement. Beldon could not hold any official action against him; he had taken none. Yet the comfort which he took from it was suddenly chilled by Eames Harris.

"We've been discussing who's to carry our ultimatum up to Covington," Harris said to Doane. "Doc is crippled with the gout. Cordellier very modestly says he's small potatoes—and I agree that we should have a civic leader. It looks like you, Telfer."

"You're a far better St. Jo citizen than I am, Eames," Doane stalled.

Harris, pleased, nevertheless shook his head. "My business overlaps Tabor's route. Both towns would take it as personal ambition. And I have another reason for not going which I can't mention at present. No, you're our man, Telfer. You could go up on the *Eagle*."

Doane did not relish the commission. But he could not refuse without jeopardizing his position in the town with the Board. In five years from now he could

fill Doc Leander's shoes. In ten, he could be a leader in the territory; perhaps a governor of one of the new states which eventually would form here. He nodded to Harris.

"I'll draft a strong letter, Telfer," Harris said. "Give it to Amos Tabor."

"Tabor?"

"Yes, isn't he head man in that camp?"

"I suppose so," Telfer said quickly. "I was thinking of Beldon."

Harris laughed. "I think not. Beldon's just running Tabor's gambling tables and girls. No Amos Tabor is your man—or Harmon perhaps."

Doane shrugged, careful not to leave the impression that he knew the real Covington boss. He said that he'd make the *Eagle* on her up-trip Tuesday and be back in six days. The meeting broke up, Doc Leander hobbling on his crutches and urging Doane to carry his gun. "They're a hard crowd, Telfer. Your best protection will be your nerve but I'd have a gun handy as well."

Doane said his thanks and drove off.

Nerve! His was no protection whatever. Right now his belly felt bottomless; inside he was flabby. But he had to make this one effort, this one fight, to rid himself of Beldon and his web. After that there could be no stopping him.

He drew up before a house on K Street. In spite of the late hour, he boldly rattled the harness bells which hung from a trunnel beside the timbered door. The man who came greeted him warmly and with deference. "Welcome, Mr. Doane. Just a minute. Esther will make a light. Come in, sir."

Telfer waved him down. "No thanks, Tom—and my apologies for this late call. I just wanted to see you and your wife about Beau. She's not looking well."

"I thought she was looking fine, considering," Tom Brand said. "Of course, she was hit hard. Is anything wrong, Mr. Doane?"

"Well—nothing definite. But I think she's—well, grieving inside too much. Hasn't Esther been aware of it?"

Beau's sister clucked her tongue. "You're a noticing man, Mr. Doane. Yes, she's hurt inside. She's ben edgy and kind of nervous. So am I, for that matter—first Pa and now Gil. Can we help?"

"Yes," Telfer said. "I think a change would help her; a few days away from St. Joseph. I've got to go north for a week or so on the *Eagle*. If you would coax Beau to make the trip with us, with us all I mean, I think it would do her good. The river is cool and the country west is beautiful now."

Tom Brand nodded in quick approval. "A good notion. But I can't leave the works. Esther, you and Beau go ahead. It'll do you both good. You're very kind, Mr. Doane. We'll see Beau first thing tomorrow."

"The *Eagle* leaves at noon next Tuesday," Telfer said. "I'll send a carriage. Good night, Tom; Mrs. Brand."

He drove to the Bijou Hotel, and, in the bar, ordered a double whiskey. He did not linger over it. At the desk, he reserved two staterooms on the Covington packet for Tuesday, then climbed the stair to his office and bedroom on the second floor. He lighted the lamp over his desk and drew out the packet of policies which Beldon's toughie had delivered. With a flourish, feeling the liquor strong in his blood, he affixed his official signature to the policies.

In the final analysis, these were his best protection—probably better even than Beau and her sister. But he was glad that he had made the arrangement anyway. Then, undressing, he stretched out on his bed.

He kept thinking about Mr. Cordellier. It was funny—this sober, God-fearing citizen and his shop, dealing in red roses and death. But after a while he slept and for the first time in months he did not tuck his pillow under his stomach to ease the eternal ache there. In ten days Tiny Belden would be dead and he would not even have to remember how he had tried to break from him and so miserably failed.

CHAPTER VI

DEEP WATER

AS HAINES BUTLER wheeled the *War Hawk* through the winding, cliff-flanked channel from Vermillion, he felt new life in the vessel. She had been rid of forty tons of boiler deck goods. At the warehouse of the Montana Forwarding Company, they had taken on six tons.

Significantly this had again come from a second floor loft and was now cluttering the cabins and passages of the boat deck; quite separated from what Haines classified as "legitimate freight."

But he was now interested in still another weight which had been shipped. He could not feel this eight hundred odd pounds in his rudder tackles as he wove through planters and over bars but he could clearly hear it. The six hundred pound burro was braying in its stall of cordwood and he could hear its rider exhorting the roustabouts in their 'tween landing nests amidst the remaining lower deck freight. The *War Hawk* had been visited by the Spittin' Prophet.

The Spittin' Prophet was a magnificent figure of a man; all of six feet six tall, straight as a swale reed and crowned by a flowing white mane of top hair and lush tobacco-stained whiskers. His eyes and his face were deceptively young and his voice high-pitched and quavering. He was gentle and mild until he began preaching. Then his whole being exuded the damnation and fierce wrath which was the theme of his wandering exhortations. Haines knew of the man but had never carried him and it was amusing now to listen to the fanatic.

His voice came high and shrill to Haines' middle window, puncuated by emissions of rich brown tobacco juice and, sometimes when he paused for emphasis, Haines could hear the Negroes murmur, "Lawdy, hear! Amen, brudder! Amen, hallelujah!"

"He's on his pet sermon," the quartermaster grinned to Haines from his post at the wheel. "Liquor. Me, I'd get drunk on the tobacco he chews not to mention whiskey! He's goin' up to Yankton with us."

"Amos shouldn't allow strangers on board," Haines said carefully.

But the quartermaster did not rise to the bait. "He's on an Army pass between posts," he offered, "on account of he's kind of a missioner to the Indians. Amos'll drop him at Yankton. He's got his eyes on those barrels on the boiler deck."

Haines had been wondering about those barrels. There were eighty-eight of them, each marked "Flour" and burned with a Westport mill brand and the U. S. Army seal. What had aroused his curiosity was the fact that the barrels, through all the shiftings of freight, had been carefully kept separated into two lots of forty barrels each. He could discover no difference between the lots except one and, though he did not know the significance of this difference, he suspected that it could bear directly upon his problem. One lot of barrels was pine staved; the other was staved in red oak.

Butler was certain about the rest of the cargo now. It was obvious that boat deck goods were upper-river Indian annuities bound directly for the reservations. The goods way-billed to the Vermillion Army post had been delivered honestly and their shipment records not tampered with. That would keep the legitimate business officially in the clear. It was making a sensible pattern now and Haines felt that he was thinking correctly. It would be beyond Yankton that he would have to look for the real game. And it was beyond the game itself that he would look for the leaders; it was there that he could expect to see Moses Pennel and Amos Tabor in full action.

Or would it not be Amos Tabor?

He found himself wondering about the *War Hawk's* skipper. Tabor had been drunk since last night and only now with Yankton ahead, had he finally ceased nursing the whiskey bottle which he carried in his coat pocket. The captain had paid him no attention—in fact, once Tabor had made it clear to his officers that Butler was the full and commissioned pilot, he had let him severely alone. That could mean extreme carelessness—which Haines could not accept—or watchful waiting to test him out. But he knew that he was safe for a while. Without a pilot, Tabor and his packet were impotent and Haines proceeded on the assumption that he was not trusted and was tolerated by Amos only because of his river knowledge.

He could hear the Spittin' Prophet going it now. The man's voice was reaching new, almost hysterical heights; rising above the chuffing of the engine exhausts: "Whiskey!" he shouted. "Whiskey, the Evil One; liquor, the Devil in a green bottle! For yer tired body, ye say! For yer dull mortal wits, ye say! Aye—for ye is whiskey ever the mocker, the deceiver! But while yer bodies lift and yer mind sheds its dignity, the green bottle is spill-

ing of its poison into yer everlasting souls that it may burn more spiritedly in the fires of eternal Hell! O, repent, ye swine, ye sinners born; throw off yer bondage to Master Whiskey and crawl on yer dirty bellies afore the everlasting Throne!"

"He's lickin' it," the quartermaster grinned. "First thing you know, he'll get Amos sore."

Reegan, the first mate, called from the texas deck: "Cap wants her laid to the Yankton wharf boat, pilot. Keep your steam up—he's heading upriver as soon as we unload."

Haines nodded. He'd be seeing things soon; things which would prove what he suspected. He wondered, grimly, if he would ever be allowed to return and tell about those things.

"Ease her larboard," Haines said to the quartermaster. "That's a dirty boil ahead; probably got a sawyer under it."

"Deep water, I'd say. She boils straight up, Mr. Butler."

Haines shook his head. "Larboard, I said, mister. Turtles don't broach from deep water. An old sollacker just winked at you from the middle of it."

"Sorry, Mr. Butler. I called it wrong."

"Don't be sorry. Just remember." Haines said.

He could feel his stock rise with the quartermaster as the *War Hawk* chewed up the thick, muddy waters avoiding the river's hidden dangers. That was a good quick accurate shot which had brought Dutton down and every hand on board had seen him coolly knock out the paddle buckets of the *Dakota* yesterday. They respected him. For all Tabor's officers knew, he was one of them.

HE WAS awakened from his dreamy contemplation of the bronze banks which whisked by, by the mate's sudden cry: "Wood stop, Wood stop! All hands!"

"Tabor's last yard until Running Water reservation," the quartermaster said. "Take her in, Mr. Butler?"

"Take her in."

Waiting, he could hear the chunks of hickory and oak thump aboard. The *War Hawk* burned thirty logs an hour at cruising speed and her wood stock seemed always to be melting away. He could hear the choppers, knocking down trees to dry, and the sharp ring of the foredeck buzz saw as it corded the already seasoned trunks into four-foot billets. The busy sounds were interrupted by a whoop from the tree fellers.

"Elk! Sac's brung in an elk!"

"By God, that's what I call a fair decent hunter. I'm sick to death of buffalo. Elk! Boys, this trip we don't eat. We dine!"

They gathered around Louis Sac's trophy, prodding the big white-bellied elk with caulked boots and estimating its weight. Sac was hog-dressing the creature expertly, saving the hide to trade at some future fur post. Even summer elk had value as whang leather, thongs and rawhide. The Spittin' Prophet shouldered his way into the group. "Save me the liver, man," he cried. "'Tis the real heart of all flesh. Give it to me!"

Louis Sac glanced up from his cutting. "The hide and lights are mine," he said. What'll you trade?"

"My blessing, my blessing through all yer days on earth!"

"Ain't worth it, mister," Sac said flatly.

"A bible, then," the Spittin' Prophet cried. "Damn near new, it is."

"Has it got a calendar in the back?"

"No! Its calendar for ye is in Revelations—for ye and all men born of Satan and nurtured on Belzebub's green bottle! 'There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth . . .'"

"Oh, hell," Sac grinned. "Here's your liver."

The Spittin' Prophet grabbed the bloody dripping organ and ran with it to the boat. Drawing a long pointed steel rod from his left boot, he speared the mass of blubbery flesh and nailed it to the starboard grasshopper pole. From his possible sack he brought out a battered tin cup and placed this beneath the elk liver to catch the lazy ooze of blood and juice that fell from it. Then vastly pleased, he strode aft to exhort the roustabouts again.

Haines, hanging from the upper deck rail now, grinned. It was old Indian medicine, straight bloody liver juice—but he wondered how the Spittin' Prophet would find the taste. Reegan, doubled by laughter, had poured a lively dollop of whiskey into the cup.

They rolled upriver again, through the turbulent rips and eddies of the twisting channels behind the sand islands and

"Ye can't fool the Prophet this time, Amos Tabor. I know ye got the devil's fire-brew on board!"

past the mouth of the in-pouring James River. The river here was ochre in color and, inevitably, Haines heard again the talk of gold from the hands who dozed in the shade of the texas. On the Niobrara—way in, almost into the butte country; that's where Freeman and Mad Willy and Lieutenant Scott, of the 2nd Cavalry, had reported the lodes. Some sober-heads thought it was only copper or fool's gold but most were eager to believe that it was gold and that pure nuggets lay about for the lifting. Haines cut the wild speculations short by a long whistle for the Yankton wharfboat.

The sleepy landing place leisurely awakened. A few men strolled from the single building which was a sod store on the bank, and two blanket-shrouded Indians made the vast effort of opening their eyes. From a tent fly pitched beside the cart path which led eastward over the cottonwood-studded prairie, a dust-stained trooper emerged and ambled sleepily to the wharfboat. His wagon and mule team were already backed against the wharfboat platform.

As Haines called for the docking hawsers to be run to the old flatboat which served as receiving stage and warehouse, the trooper called, "What you got, Cap?"

"Forty-four barrels of flour for them red pets of yours on the James," Amos yelled back. "Sign for 'em and we'll unload."

The trooper grinned and came aboard, signed the waybills. "Roll 'em onto the dock," he said. "I'll have to ride up to the post for more wagons."

The Spittin' Prophet screamed his dreadful doom from the winch-head as the roustabouts trundled the flour ashore. They stacked the barrels wearily. Haines noted that all were oak staved and, as they dropped to the plank wharf they made a solid, heavy sound which echoed up from the river surface against the high-propped flatboat.

"You want to buy a genuine Assiniboine warrior's skull, mister?"

"No!"

Haines waved the man away. The store idlers were spilling over the *War Hawk* now, halfbreeds and lazy whites and most with something to sell. Haines retreated to his wheelhouse. But a girl followed him and he had to grasp her shoulders, turn her around and push her hard to convince her that he was not interested in her wares.

"Not bad, Mr. Butler," the quartermaster smirked. "We'll take a few girls upriver, maybe." Suddenly he pointed to the dock. "By Jake, there goes the Spittin' Prophet after green bottles again!"

Haines, amused, watched the white-maned enemy of the demon rum now.

THE preacher had whipped another slim steel rod from his boot and was gleefully attacking the barrels which remained on the *War Hawk*. With his jackknife he widened cracks, inserted his rod and twisted it about in the flour, probing for a solid. His face glowed with a holy light and he muttered with a ghoulish relish as he jabbed into barrel after barrel.

"Ye can't fool the Prophet this time, Amos Tabor," he cried. "I know ye got the devil's fire-brew on board of ye. I know! 'Twas revealed to me by the Throne—in a dream 'twas. Hah! Do I strike green glass?"

"Only the edge of the barrel, Prophet." Amos Tabor grinned good-naturedly. "I don't carry whiskey on my boat and you better understand that I'll skin you alive if you damage my freight."

"Ye did! Ye did! Twice I caught ye with my little searcher. Ye've got it in the barrels this time!"

Amos deliberately sucked his flask to torment the man, then grimaced broadly. "Why don't you probe those barrels on the wharf boat?"

"Ye take me for a plain idjit, man!" Prophet cried. "You'd be running whiskey right into the army post, wouldn't ye? No . . . ye can't fool me that way, Amos! Stand away—I'll find yer whiskey and then the Throne help ye. I'll have Captain Davis down and ye in his guardhouse ten minutes later, as Habukuk is my witness!"

Haines noted the man's diminishing industry as he probed. He found nothing in the flour and his disappointment was strong on his face. Amos lounged, enjoying the scene, goading the man on. "Looked enough?" he inquired truculently. "Then get off, Prophet. Your pass is only good for Yankton. Get off my boat, man!"

The Spittin' Prophet relieved himself of tobacco juice, his defeat strong on him. Then he cried a terrible Old Testament curse on the *War Hawk* and all her people, took the elk liver and the cup of drippings and strode to the shore. Here he paused to deliver another imprecation; then turned his back and marched, still straight and wrathful, past the trooper's fly along the cart path toward the distant army post on the James River.

Amos guffawed, then yelled for Reegan. "Get these pine barrels ashore now, Ally—and fetch the oak ones back on board. The damned old fool—I even invited him to look in the oak ones for his whiskey! Switch 'em, Ally, and hurry—there's the dust of those extra army wagons coming this way. We haven't much time."

Haines heard the barrels thump. The clerk was chasing the Yankton people ashore. Beyond a fringe of waterwillows, in shore, the first of the Army wagons drew into sight from a wash. Tabor would have to make short work of it or be caught in his switch of barrels. There'd be a lieutenant with the wagon detail—and you couldn't joke off or buy off these young, eager West Pointers as you could a territory trooper.

Amos realized the danger now also. He harried the roustabouts with impatient profane urgings. Haines alerted the engine room. Perhaps they'd have to cut for it, abandoning the whiskey-loaded flour barrels. They were powerful evidence. For a moment Haines debated with himself. Let Tabor be caught! He could fumble a bell, delay the getaway, and Captain Davis would have the *War Hawk* redhanded. But that would only yield Tabor and Haines remembered that Daniel Peck and Eames Harris would convict Tabor any time. No, he was after wolf, the top man.

The army wagons were crawling down the cart path now, mule bells tinkling in the bright prairie sunshine, the skinner's cries sharp over the cracks of the long whips. On the first wagon was an officer.

"Lay to it!" Tabor lashed at the sweating stevedores. "Roll 'em faster. Reegan, Charlie—grab hand trucks and give a lift! Send your chunkers for'ard here. Roll 'em, boys—Davis has a big guardhouse!"

Twenty barrels still remained on the wharfboat. The first army wagon was wheeling, the mules headed for shade. Haines whistled to Tabor, sweating his gang on the boiler deck: "They'll be on you in a minute, Amos. Cut the bow line and I'll get you out of it!"

"How?"

"Cut the hawser, man!" Haines yelled. "Never mind how."

He heard the sing of the severed line which held the boat against the current and felt the *War Hawk's* bow swing away from the wharf; then the sharp snub as she fetched against the stern line. "Jump aboard, Amos!" he had time to cry before he crashed full speed ahead to the engine room grating.

"Line her 'cross river, quartermaster!"

The *War Hawk's* twin Pitmans spun the great stern wheel in tumbling fury. The whole packet vibrated, her upperworks dancing on their timber stanchions. Haines could feel her struggle against the tether which bound her. She lunged forward, ominously, then fell slack.

He stopped her, backed; getting a new bite. And this time the wharfboat must

come. Captain Davis' young officer was running toward the dock, yelling, and the Spittin' Prophet, comprehension in his loud cries, was legging it back over the cart path.

Hot steam and angry brown smoke surged down over the boat and the river boiled and heaved from the paddle wash. Haines put another bell down his wire pull.

"She's comin'. By God, Butler, she's takin' the wharfboat clean off the pilin!"

Haines nodded. He could feel the creeping progress of the packet too. In a sudden, sickening wrench, the wharfboat tore lose from the shore, slid off its moorings into the brown river and docilely followed the *War Hawk* into mid-channel.

"Head upriver," Haines said softly. "Behind Gunshot Island we'll draw the wharfboat alongside, finish switching barrels and let her drift back to the army. Ring her down, mister."

Tabor was in the wheelhouse, his relief showing in his slack jaws. "You're a heller, Haines," he said with quick friendliness. "You have accidents just at the right time. I was in real trouble there for a minute or two. Why ring her down?"

"To make the switch before that old dry wharfboat sinks from under. It wouldn't be an accident to steal army freight. That trooper has your signed waybills, Amos. Send the flour back."

Tabor pursed his thick lips. "You're right. All I want is the whiskey. Stop her, Haines."

With his hand pulling the bell wire, Haines asked, "Any Lackawanna Gold Seal in the barrels?"

"Might be, Haines. You can have all you find."

"Obliged, Amos," Haines grinned. "Get below and finish the job."

IT WAS that easy. Haines had an admission which could drive Amos Tabor from the Territory. But more than that, he had gained the captain's confidence. He felt now that he was one of them, as close to Tabor as Reegan or Charlie Ling, and he was sharply aware of his changed status. He could feel it in the quartermaster who becketed the wheel and laughed. "That'll make a famous story in camp, Mr. Butler. My name's Jesse Doran—make it just Jesse. I'm proud to serve your wheel, Mr. Butler."

"Thanks, Jesse. I suppose I'm tarred with the same brush as you fellows now. It suits me. I am here to make money and get to Moses Pennel."

"Amos Tabor can triple your wages if he's a mind to," Doran said cautiously. "But Pennel ain't on this boat."

"Then maybe Amos has a pet pony in cabin twenty, eh, Jesse? I notice he gets a tray of food pretty often." Haines winked broadly and slapped Doran on the back. "Well—I can't afford to fight with Pennel now, can I? You tell that pony nobody will ride him should he want to come out."

Doran did not answer. But Haines had no doubt that he'd report back to Amos and Pennel would emerge from his hiding. He would soon be needed and Butler had been wondering how Tabor would handle the situation when they banked at Running Water and the Indian agent would have to deliver the annuities. He was sure that Pennel feared him—else why had he remained hidden since Covington?—and he did not doubt that Moses Pennel might try to shoot him in the back as readily as Milo Dutton had.

Yes; passing the word to Pennel had given him an additional margin of safety. How much he did not then realize—for he did not know that Amos Tabor was making a one-way voyage and that neither the *War Hawk* nor her pilot were to return downriver. But a moment later, Haines suspected it—for, as he called for steam again and the packet swept upriver, the wharfboat drifted astern, turning lazily in the down current and he saw that it was completely bare. Tabor had not sent the forty-four army barrels down on her. He had appropriated them, making it a clear case of theft which the official army would not ignore.

"He's pulling out," Butler muttered with sudden understanding. "Tabor is cleaning up and quitting and not counting costs. I've seen it in his eyes, in his nerves—it's why he's been drinking so much. It's why he's been so careless."

Louis Sac agreed. They tied up to the bank below the Niobrara that night, and because it was Indian country Tabor kept his boilers hot and sentries stationed on the shore. It was at a watch a hundred

yards from the boat, that Haines, strolling behind a calming stogie, found Sac.

The hunter grinned at him. "The more you get Tabor out of trouble the worse you get into it yourself, hey?"

Haines laughed. "It will end soon, perhaps after we clear the Running Water reservation tomorrow, Louis. He's fixing to make a break from the organization, I think—take all he can and leg it for the Pacific."

"The signs say so." Sac nodded and tamped his pipe. "And you and me ain't calculated to go with him. Nobody is."

"It will wreck the gang. He'll probably cheat those Mandans for an all-time record and there will be reprisals. You got any ideas?"

"Follow the trail," Sac said. "It always goes someplace."

"Suits me—if I can backtrack."

"Keep the trail open so's you can," Sac advised. "He can't take this packet over the mountains—but you could take it back to Covington. Just keep yourself alive, Haines." Sac paused, flipped pebbles at the thin flames of his watch fire. "What did you do to Pennel?"

"Nothing—except pass the word I'd let him alone."

"He took off for Running Water on a boat pony, loaded with whiskey. I thought maybe you'd scared him off."

"No, I haven't seen him, Louis. He's softening up the chiefs with whiskey, I suppose. That means Tabor's planning something."

"Could be," Sac said and fell silent.

They listened to the river gurgling over its bars and swishing through the tangled mats of sawyers and planters. Butler felt an evilness in the river up here in the Indian country; its song was not happy and its current was swift and licking and sucking. That's the way it once had been at St. Jo and Independence and St. Louis, he thought. Evil and polluted by the fur traders and gold seekers and whiskey runners who greedily—and bravely, too!—followed the trail makers. Only when government and homesteaders and tillers of the soil had come had the river become again pure and clean. Somebody had led the van; somebody like himself and Louis Sac and Eames Harris and Daniel Peck who blazed the trail for decency and civilization here on the upper Missouri now.

"Them cases and bar'ls on the boat deck," Sac was saying. "They were looted all right, Haines. I put my mark on one in St. Jo the night you found 'em half empty and it's in one of the larboard cabins right now—filled to the top of the staves. You can see where they were prized open in places. I reckon the stuff was cased and moved north on the *Eagle*, like a regular consignment, the insurance collected and then put back in the government stamped cases at the Covington and Vermillion warehouses—in that second floor loft. Any wandering agent, or the post clerks, would check it through without a suspicion. Everything goes through to the reservations and it's Tabor makes the final haul."

"That's a big speech for you, Louis."

Sac spit into the fire. "When I got something to say, I talk."

"You think it's the work of the same gang then?"

"Certainly I do. Only maybe Tabor don't even know about that part of it. It leads to a higher up."

"For me, this always has led to higher up. Who, Louis?"

"You know."

"Stew Harmon, Tiny Beldon . . ."

"Say it, Haines!"

"No! Telfer Doane wouldn't be in it, Louis. He doesn't have to."

The hunter shrugged. "You still got a blind spot, Haines. When you see straight about Doane, your trail will open up."

"Do you see straight about him?"

"Hell," Sac growled. "Of course not. If I did I'd tell you. Now get back to the boat; I got to get me some shut-eye."

Haines reminded him, "You're on duty, Louis."

"Shucks!" Sac grunted. When them coyotes and owls shut up I'll worry about Injuns. They're better sentries than any human on God's earth. Good night, Haines."

CHAPTER VII

THE DOUBLE GAME

THE Mandans were gathering in full ceremonial dress on the long sand beach opposite the mouth of the Niobrara. The river poured its yellow sand into the

Missouri, making and destroying deltas and bars by the scores each day; their sands sometimes sparkling as if its grains were actually gold revealed momentarily to excite man and call him farther and farther into the west. Haines had trouble holding the *War Hawk* to the bank and had to send one of the yawl boats upriver to a sand bar to plant a deadman. Then, with a long hawser from the buried twelve foot log to the stern, he was able to ground the flat bow and hold the packet steady against the current.

The Indians immediately swarmed to the water's edge and tried to clamber aboard. But to Amos Tabor this was a familiar occasion and he had stationed hands with light poles to keep them off and quickly passed a half dozen bottles of whiskey among them. There were no further attempts to board as the bottle tipped from man to man. Haines was struck by these savages. They were muscularly well-developed, although only medium in stature and were a true red color; not the gray-white or muddy bronze of the Mississippi tribes. He supposed they were expert horsemen and noticed that most were bandy-legged. Beyond the beach on which they milled, he could see their tethered horses, many with travois attached in readiness to carry the annuities off to the tribal village. Beyond the ponies were the light summer tepees which were used as trail shelters. Thin grass and buffalo chip breakfast fires inside still smoked lazily. In a grove of hickories, stood a tepee larger than the others and before it, on haired buffalo hides, sat the chiefs and the shaman.

"Their medicine bundles are inside," Jesse Doran said. "They always lug them along when they meet Amos; it's necessary to have their great god Tiwara handy, I expect. Pennel's got 'em feeling good and high. We'll have no trouble today."

In the saloon, Amos Tabor greeted him jovially, whiskey still strong on him. "Keep your fires up, Haines." He winked. "Those Mandans have their weapons not far off. I know those devils."

A solemn drumming now sounded from the tepee village and the three chiefs and the shaman marched bleakly to the beach. Behind them followed Moses Pennel, his yellow-tailed coat and strapped trousers contrasting sharply with the bare-skinned

The bottle tipped from man to man.

Indians. An Indian boy led Pennel's pony. At the bow of the *War Hawk*, the party mounted the niggerhead of the winch. From this commanding position, he muttered something in Mandan to a chief, then swung to Tabor and his officers who were grouped at the foot of the boatdeck stairway.

"Crazy Wolf is ready to sign the receipts," Pennel intoned, making it sound profound. "Get his mark before he falls over, Amos; he's had two quarts since dawn."

Amos Tabor moved away from the group. Haines noted that he wore a cocked admiral's hat now; likely a relic of New Orleans—a garish piece of headgear complete to a rooster plume and bullion swag. The Mandans were impressed by it. With sudden impetuosity, Amos took it from his head and handed it over the rail to Crazy Wolf. It was a calculated gift and Haines could sense the pleasure of the gathered tribe. Crazy Wolf unsmilingly placed it on his head; then looked at his image in the river.

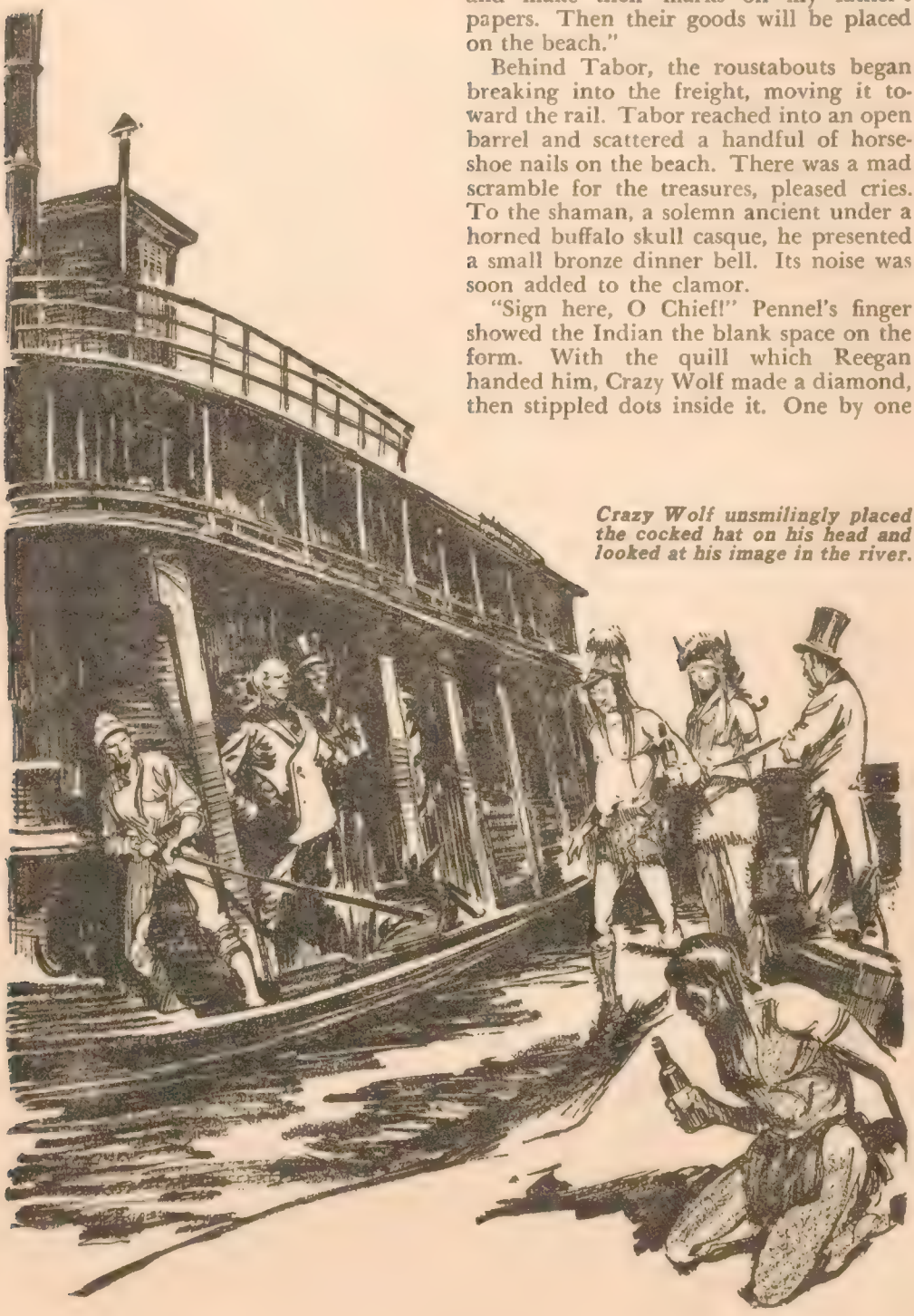
"He wants to know is this from the government, Amos?" Pennel asked.

"It is a present to the great chief from his brother Tabor," Amos said unctuously. "Let Crazy Wolf and Little Oak and

Found-in-the-Grass now step to the rail and make their marks on my father's papers. Then their goods will be placed on the beach."

Behind Tabor, the roustabouts began breaking into the freight, moving it toward the rail. Tabor reached into an open barrel and scattered a handful of horseshoe nails on the beach. There was a mad scramble for the treasures, pleased cries. To the shaman, a solemn ancient under a horned buffalo skull casque, he presented a small bronze dinner bell. Its noise was soon added to the clamor.

"Sign here, O Chief!" Pennel's finger showed the Indian the blank space on the form. With the quill which Reegan handed him, Crazy Wolf made a diamond, then stippled dots inside it. One by one



Crazy Wolf unsmilingly placed the cocked hat on his head and looked at his image in the river.

the chiefs made their marks and Moses Pennel witnessed them.

Haines stole a glance to the boatdeck. Louis Sac was taking it in. Sac might be needed as a witness someday for Haines knew that this was what he had come to see; here were the double receipts, one set of which covered the goods which would not be delivered. Grunting, fumbling the quill, the three chiefs were again making their marks. Amos permitted himself a sigh of satisfaction. "All right, Pennel," he cried. "Now we'll trade the whiskey and then give 'em the treaty goods. Tell 'em so and have 'em trot out their furs."

The Indians brought good winter furs. At any upriver fur post Tabor could get twenty times the values of the crude trade whiskey he now lifted from the broached flour barrels. The pile of bundled skins grew behind him. Haines, going aloft to the wheelhouse with apprehension strong upon him, reckoned their value at near eight thousand dollars.

On the beach the Indians were becoming noisy and quarrelsome as the alcohol inflamed them. The squaws and children silently slunk off to their tepees. Crazy Wolf and the shaman were the drunkest and their demand for the annuities and ammunition momentarily grew louder. Haines noticed that the boat crew had abandoned its pikes; some now had rifles and around Tabor's thick middle was a cartridge belt and a .45. There was trouble in the air. Haines lounged on the wheelhouse sill, guessing what was to come. Amos would pull out; there would be no

goods left with the Mandans. He was deserting with all he could get.

But he was not prepared for what occurred.

Crazy Wolf was staggering and belching, clamoring for the treaty goods in a loud raucous bellow. It was a show; a show for his people and was meaningless to a seasoned frontierman like Louis Sac. The chief became bolder, reaching for the packaged goods which lined the rail.

"Get back!" It was Charlie Ling, poking at the strutting warrior with his pole. Ling was laughing; his poke was playful.

It was all a play, a harmless face-saving act and everybody knew it. Everybody but Amos Tabor. Amos gave no warning. Deliberately, wantonly, he raised his gun and fired twice at Crazy Wolf.

In the sudden hush after those two sharp sobering shots Haines clearly heard Sac say, "The damn fool, the plain damn fool!"

Crazy Wolf's face blanked. His black eyes—cold and dangerous now—flashed hatred such as Haines had never seen in any man. In the eyes were three generations of mistrust and deceit and burning hatred which he would never forget. Crazy Wolf cried out in Mandan. Then clutched his belly and fell to the sand.

At the signal, the Indians dashed for their hidden weapons. Pennel, from behind a barricade of barrels, unleashed his own gun, blazing at the milling Mandans. Butler, on his knees, heard Tabor's wild cry up the stairwell: "Back her off! Cut that deadman hawser and get her out of here!"

Haines' answer was the crash of bells and, as if Sli Cuthbert on his grating were waiting for the order, the exhausts chuffed sharply and the paddle beat on the river. Swiftly, spitting rifle fire, the *War Hawk* backed into the eddies of the Niobrara, idled briefly and then moved upriver. But after the brief exchange of shots, eight Mandans lay still on the beach and Charlie Ling and a deck hand lay dead on the packet's forward deck.

Jesse Doran, spoking the wheel from his knees, his eyes just at sill level, swore savagely. "Amos never done that before. He always give 'em the goods after he traded. This'll start hell on the river, Mister Butler. What d' you reckon he's up to?"

"Get over to the west shore," Haines growled. "Those Mandans will follow us on ponies. From now on we'll have to anchor behind a bar at night—the Indians will pick us off one by one if we ever set foot on the east shore again."

He stalked below; angry, disgust in his soul, hating the *War Hawk* and every man on it, hating himself, too, for the role he had to play. Louis Sac whispered as they passed, "I was after Pennel—but he moved and I knocked that bodyguard of Tabor's over."

"Does Pennel know you took a pot at him?"

Sac looked as if Haines were teasing him. "Of course, he don't!"

"Good. Leave him for me, Louis."

"All right—if you want it that way, Haines. Look out for fire from the shore. Mandans can shoot as good as you can. Did you see that rider dust it upriver?"

"I didn't notice."

"Well, he went like an elk with a fireball on his tail," Sac said. "That means the whole river will be gunning for us—clear to the Cheyenne and Blackfoot and Gros Ventre tribes. Tabor is a total fool—if he expects to trade this stuff to the upriver reservations he should keep them peaceful."

Haines said, "What will calm the Indians, Louis? Their goods?"

The hunter shook his head. "Nope. They're used to being cheated and only want to be cheated decently. Now they want Tabor."

"So do we."

"Do we, Haines? Dan Peck said something about rabbits."

"The rabbit track will lead to the wolf den. Tabor is mine until I don't need him. You had it in mind to give them Tabor, didn't you?"

Sac nodded soberly. "Yes. I'm half red, Haines. If the Mandans had Tabor they'd make it a local affair. If this spreads, both your people and mine are in for some trouble."

Haines agreed. Yet the basic trouble was far deeper than Amos Tabor. There would always be another Tabor, another betrayal, another cause for revenge and reprisal. The Mandans could have Amos for all he cared. But not now. First Amos must show him the trail to the real leaders, to the upriver headquarters which must

exist some place as a clearing house for all the stolen goods and whiskey this moment burdening the *War Hawk*.

To deliver Tabor to Little Oak and Found-in-the-Grass might stop the angry Mandans. They had been sending smoke all the afternon but so far it had not been answered from the north or west. There was still time. The Mandans, alone, could not wage a full frontier war.

Yes, Amos was the key. Like Milo Dutton, he was the next link in the chain. Purposefully, then, Haines moved into the saloon.

COOKIE'S triangle was clanging and he was enormously hungry. He took his place at Amos' table. Eating, he saw Moses Pennel carving elk roast at the mate's table. Amos, watching Haines, poured wild honey on his bread and said, "I'm glad you decided to let Pennel alone, Haines."

"I didn't decide to let him alone. It's only a truce. He killed my cub on the *Cheyenne Belle* and some day he'll pay for it."

"Two Kettles did," Amos said. "Maybe Pennel provoked him—but I notice you aren't particular who you provoke yourself, Butler."

Haines snorted. "I'm not after Pennel for what he is, or what he does to the damned Indians. This is personal, between us—and when he's no longer useful to us, I'll shoot him. Now, we need him."

"We?"

Haines played his hand out, looking levelly at the captain. "I said 'we', Amos. Straight wages don't hire me to play this game. Do you think Milo Dutton would have clipped the *Dakota* for you? Or got you those flour barrels at Yankton—or your precious hide this morning? I knew what I was coming into, of course. I delivered. Now it's up to you to pay off."

Tabor belched and chuckled, showing no anger. "I always took you for a cool one, Haines. What do you want?"

"One-third, Amos."

"Hold on now, man! There's others. That's too high."

"You can settle with Stew Harmon," Haines said carefully.

Amos cursed and sputtered. "Stew! That fool?" he growled. "What makes you think I take orders from a small-timer like Harmon?"

"You know a hell of a lot about my business for a stranger, Butler," Tabor rasped.

"All right. Tiny Beldon then," Haines said softly and felt his words bite home. "But a one-third share is fair—the Mountain Water is ahead, Amos."

"The river's not that low," Amos said, with sudden concern. "I can get over the bar easy, Haines."

"Check the flood marks 'longshore if you doubt me. You'll need to deadman and grass-hopper over the Mountain Water and I'm the only man on board who can do it for you. There's not four feet of water in the main channel. I want one-third, Amos."

Tabor poured whiskey into his coffee dregs, stirred, then quaffed the muddy liquor. "All right, Butler," he said quietly. "Get me north of the Mountain Water and I'll split one to two with you."

"In cash, Amos. I don't know the trading game."

"In what I've got, Haines. The hell of this country is that values are in goods, not cash. When it turns into cash, it goes east—to a bank. I don't see much of it."

"But you're going to change that, aren't you, Amos?"

Tabor bridled, quick anger flooded his heavy jowls. "You know a hell of a lot about my business for a stranger, Butler," he rasped.

Haines laughed and sipped coffee. "I've been studying you and our setup, Amos. Some of your boys talk too much, too." This was a flat lie but Haines did not miss the deepened flush. "I think I know enough to cut in."

"Guesses," Tabor growled. "I cut you in because I need a pilot, that's all."

"Oh," Haines grinned and rose, "I figured that, too."

Pacing the hurricane deck under the cool stars that evening. Haines gave his words with the captain much thought. Tabor was still playing a double game; crossing his boss (who Haines now did not doubt was Tiny Beldon), and himself as well. He needed a pilot; that obviously was true. But, if he planned to break away from Beldon after trading off the goods he was collecting, he would not need to care in the least what Butler knew about him. He would be far away from the law; in Canada, or on a ship out of a Colombia River port. Therefore, Butler reasoned now, he had but one purpose in agreeing to cut him in—to use his knowledge of the Missouri and when he no longer needed it, to get rid of him.

He grinned wryly. A pleasant prospect. He ought to wear his gun again. Lately, he'd avoided its heavy bulkiness and left it in his cabin. It was there now, in his bag. But the Mountain Water was a full day ahead and there were hundreds of miles of river beyond to be navigated and so he felt safe for awhile.

Sli Cuthbert, also taking the refreshing night air pouring over the anchored vessel from the distant Rosebud Mountains, came and puffed his cob pipe beside him. "Them Mandans went into camp below Snake Gully Point," he observed. "You can see their fires from the quarter. As soon as they get help, they'll jump us. I hope Stew and his boys are handy; they're scrappers. Are we goin' into Medicine Arrow tonight, Butler?"

"Amos hasn't said," Haines replied.

Medicine Arrow Creek flowed into the main river off the larboard beam; its flood waters had formed the crescent-shaped island, now studded with lush planters, in which their deadman was buried. The question was a surprise to Haines. Carefully, not revealing that he was fishing for information, he said, "I've never been into the main camp, Sli."

"Only got one camp," the engineer said sleepily. "Everything that don't trade, goes there, mostly the whiskey. Indians come clean from the Badlands for a drink in August. Three hundred miles! August is powerful thirsty weather on the upper river, ain't it? Well, I'm glad we don't go in tonight. I've throttled enough steam for one day. Between paddle steam and the winches, it'd kill me."

"Then we grasshopper into the Medicine Arrow?"

"Clear into the swamp—four miles—lift her and thump her on those damn spars."

"If Amos goes in, I'll give you notice to fire up," Haines said, "but I don't think he means to this trip, Sli."

Cuthbert looked startled. "Where in hell would he go but in?"

"Up the main river. There's nothing but trouble behind him. Maybe he doesn't care."

"That's so. There's the *Dakota;* them army people at Yankton—now the Mandans that are good and sore. Say . . . do you suppose . . . ?"

Haines grinned. "I don't have to tell you what I suppose," he said. "You can figure too. Why don't you talk it over with Reegan?"

"Damned if I won't," Sli growled. "The double-crossin' . . ."

The engineer stalked off muttering. Haines felt that Cuthbert's quick suspicions checked his own. That was good. He might need both Cuthbert and Reegan. They headed deck and engineer departments.

HAINES, knowing more than Cuthbert did, felt sure now that Tabor was going to avoid unloading at the camp. The Mountain Water shoal was on the Missouri, two hundred and ten miles up the winding, writing stream of mud. If Tabor intended to unload at the Medicine Arrow camp, why had he traded a one-third share in exchange for expert piloting through the Mountain Water rapids and sand bars? Obviously, he was not going into the camp from which the organization distributed the stolen shipments and whiskey. He was fleeing north, by the Missouri. But it was from the camp that Haines expected to pick up the final trail.

He played a desultory hand of casino with Jesse Doran, losing eight dollars and winning forty cents. Doran was pleased. "That's something I can do better than you, Butler," he chuckled. "Casino . . . and maybe something else."

"The Medicine Arrow?" Haines asked. "Have you been in?"

"Once. Milo Dutton showed me the channel. It's a twister."

"I hear Sli chunking up. Did Amos give orders yet?"

"Not yet. But he will. There'll be a moon in a little while. He probably figures to give the Mandans the slip. I wouldn't turn in; we'll be called."

"Thanks, Jesse. Guess I'll nap on the texas roof."

He stretched out on a locker, letting the prairie breeze sift through his loosened clothing. If this was the dividing of the ways for Tabor, it offered a new situation, a new set of facts to deal with, and Haines realized that he would now be pitted against Tabor alone—a Tabor no longer limited by the necessity of seeming to play the master game. He was afraid of Tabor alone; not physically afraid, but afraid of the man's unpredictableness, of his sudden rages, his periods of drunkenness, his willful thoughtless deeds committed for no reason except to satisfy his own lust and greed. It would be difficult to fathom his movements and his purposes, to keep a step ahead of his plans. But why try? He was finished with Amos Tabor. . . .

He strolled to the after rail. Sac was there, flopped on his thin belly, idly hacking at the deck with his knife and listening to the plaintive harmony of the roustabout chorus.

"They're like bugs," Louis said. "They always sing before a storm. You figured when it's goin' to storm, Haines?"

"Any minute now, Louis. Do you know what's up that creek?"

"Easy. Their camp. This afternoon when we flushed the buzzards on this island, not a one critter of 'em flew into the swamp. Somebody's there ahead of 'em, I'd say. Which way is Tabor going, Haines?"

"Up the Missouri, I think. As soon as I know—and if it's not into the Medicine Arrow, you can have him, Louis."

"Not me, Haines. Those Mandans."

Haines shook his head slowly. He was signing Amos Tabor's death warrant. "I'm finished with him. His only use now is to stop an Indian war."

"And you, Haines?"

"I'll take the *War Hawk* into the camp and declare for the organization. The trail will show up there—someplace."

"That's good medicine, Haines," the hunter said softly. "Get for'ard—you're wanted. Tabor went into the wheelhouse."

He hurried forward. Amos stood in the silent tracery of moon shadows by the great hickory wheel. He was cold sober, his small eyes steely. But cordially he said, "Sorry to bother you, Haines. I'm afraid of those Mandans. They might take a notion to attack with this moon. We're moving."

"Upriver?"

Amos hesitated a small second. "So you know what's in the Medicine Arrow? Well—we're going up the Missouri. Any objections?"

"No. It doesn't affect my third in the least. Just give me steam."

Tabor drew his lips back in a toothy grin. "You got it, Butler. Get going," he said and left.

Without a light showing, her engine room gong and jingle muffled, the *War Hawk* chewed in her hawser, cut it and, under the slow roll of the paddle, crept up the moonlit river. Haines, alone in the lofty wheelhouse, spoked her through the deep pools where the black water showed still and untroubled. From the bows the leadsmen whispered the depths. The Negroes, indifferent to any occurrence save the unloading of freight, still sang.

He called for half speed now, stemming the descending current. Behind him the door opened and closed. Haines could smell buckskin and hair grease.

"Where is he, Louis?"

"On the boiler deck. He had an argument with Ally Reegan. Reegan's suspicious—wanted to know how come we went by the camp."

"That'll help, Louis," Butler said. "All right. You can have Amos now."

"The annuities would help, too."

"Drop them off with Amos. Exactly half of them."

Sac chuckled and Haines could hear him spin his gun barrel, checking shells. "First I'll get the freight ashore. Then Tabor.

Don't linger around, Haines. You wouldn't want to watch when they find him."

Haines threw his rudders, heading for the sloping east shore. Like a wraith, the *War Hawk* ghosted into the willow fringes and lightly grounded under the bow. His bells at standby, he hung in his high window. But he could see nothing in the dark shore shadows.

He supposed that Louis Sac had his gun pressed into Tabor's belly. Without questioning, answering Amos' shouted order, the roustabouts launched the gangway and tumbled the annuity goods ashore. It took only fifteen minutes. Presently Haines saw Sac crouching over a new small blaze. A signal fire, he knew. He guessed that Amos Tabor, gagged, understanding at last, was already bound to a willow trunk. The hunter fed prairie hay to the flames; then calmly clambered on board. Sac himself called aloft, "All clear, pilot. Take her out!"

In the river, Haines stopped her. Then, under a single bell, he moved her again forward. Slowly, spoking the great pit wheel, Haines swung the packet in a half circle until the *War Hawk* was heading south. He called from the sash, "Reegan. Doran."

They came, barging into the wheelhouse. Haines said, "Jesse, I'll take her back to the Medicine Arrow. Can you get her into camp at night?"

Doran mumbled, "Sure—if you help."

"Good. Reegan, I wanted you to hear me say that. Tell Sli—and Pennel."

Ally Reegan rubbed the back of his neck. "You're doin' the smart thing, Butler," he said. "Amos was gettin' too big for this job. Who gives the orders?"

Haines said clearly, "I do—unless somebody wants to argue it."

The big mate shrugged. "Hell," he said, "I'm satisfied. A man's a plumb fool to think he can play the game alone."

CHAPTER VIII

THE SILENT MAN

CAPTAIN JONES dressed with care. It was not on every trip that the *Eagle* carried such distinguished passengers as Telfer Doane and the Nash sisters. He had spent part of the long lazy afternoon with them under the wooden awning of the saloon deck while the packet twisted up the winding river, explaining the country to them, pointing out the landings, the woodyards, the Indian camps. Doane had been a disappointment, inclined to be snobbish and setup and for all his profundity in saying it, had actually uttered nothing worth the saying. But he liked the sisters, especially Beau. There was keen life in her eyes; her questions were direct and sincere and she made him feel, in an odd way, paternal. He had no particular feeling about David Blair, the easterner, who had presented a letter of introduction from the New Madrid Steam Packet Line, except the private opinion that Blair might be a card player. But the man was obviously a gentleman and would be at table with them at eight when Moddy would serve one of the rare captain's dinners which Johns gave.

He beat the bronze prairie dust from his blue uniform coat and struggled into it. But he did not don the visored cap with the word *Captain* neatly framed in gold ivy leaves. John still considered a tall beaver the only worthy headgear of a packet master. But beaver was out of style—chiefly, he supposed, because Jim Bridger and his boys had long ago exhausted the beaver colonies up at the headwaters. Johns had seen thousands of bales of prime beaver pelts come down the river. In those days, he wore no gold braid.

Lord, a cotton army blouse, galluses and home-spun pants was good enough uniform for him. He was a working captain, comfortable with troopers and prospectors and fur factors and surveyors and Indians; not one of those social skippers who clowned for the gentry on the big line packets while a bridge master and the pilot did the real work. Nevertheless, he looked forward to his role as host.

Moddy had removed the silver candelabra from the ship's safe and set white tapers in them. Their thin flames gleamed now against snowy napery and sterling table service and let a dull sheen of somber elegance to the rosewood sideboard and highbacked chairs. Johns took a comfortable pride from the table setting.

"It's grand, Moddy," the captain told the black steward. "Get a boy busy with

the fly chaser and tell the chief to shut down his engines some; the thump of 'em will jiggle your dinner to hell an' gone."

The steward grinned. "Yassah! How come de Montana Line get demself a high class cap'n lak yo', suh?"

"Go 'long with you, Moddy!"

Sometimes Johns himself wondered why he worked for the line. Beldon, who owned it, seldom rode with him—though when he did there was always a dinner like this for him. Tabor, who skippered the *War Hawk*, was little more than a river toughie with a dollop of extra talent. Stewart Harmon, whatever he did upriver for Beldon, was not even a licensed captain. Dutton, too, did not fit the picture. He suspected crooked business someplace. But he was certain that the *Eagle* contributed nothing to that business. As near as he knew, her freight and passengers were all legitimate. Beldon seemed to want it that way for he had never been asked to undertake anything outside of regular line service. But he did not let the matter worry him now. His guests were arriving. Moddy's brother and the baker were sighing tunefully on the fiddle and banjo outside the saloon windows and Johns felt happy and proud. Perhaps this raw upper river—someday—would see a fine steamboat tradition such as he remembered from his days on the Mississippi. Perhaps it would someday lose for him its bitter flavor of intrigue and greed and evil things.

"Miss Beau, at my right, please. Mrs. Brand, opposite if you don't mind—it has been some time since my table has been graced by a hostess. Mr. Doane, Mr. Blair—King . . . Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Lon King, our pilot. Sit down, all."

Modd poured a light Plaquemon wine of French taste; then silently served a clear delicious turtle soup.

It was a pleasant leisurely dinner, excellently cooked and served and Johns felt their appreciation. The talk was light, with Beau Nash ever ready to add dash to it. Nevertheless the captain felt an undercurrent of restraint which disturbed him. The talk was too light. Doane and Beau Nash were engaged; yet they hardly spoke to each other. Blair, a silent man, contributed little. King ate and excused himself, the Council Ground bar was low and his cub still raw. It seemed to Johns that he and Esther Brand did all the talking and he was quietly relieved when Moddy served the liqueur and cigars and they adjourned to the cool bright night of the hurricane deck walk-around.

Beau Nash hooked her arm into his and fell into step. She walked for fifty feet before speaking, a light graceful child holding close to him. "Captain, where is Haines Butler?"

Johns pursed his lips. So that was it. She was not yet over Butler?

"The last I heard, Ma'am, he was studying the river from the *War Hawk*."

"Where is the *War Hawk*, Captain?"

"Now, ma'am, I wouldn't know exactly. Upriver someplace with Indian annuities and post freight."

"Is Tiny Beldon with the *War Hawk*?"

"No. I saw him leave Covington three weeks ago with a pack train—went to investigate the Niobrara gold talk, Miss Beau."

"Or so he said."

"So I heard, ma'am. Beldon isn't a talker."

He felt her hesitate, turning the next question over in her mind.

"Captain, how can I get in touch with Haines?" she asked quietly.

"Wait in Covington. He'll be back—probably."

"I don't like Covington. It's not a—safe place, Captain."

"About that, ma'am," Johns said with conviction, "nobody can argue."

Beau said good-night. She joined her sister and together they went down the stairway to the saloon deck on which were the sleeping cabins. Johns was aware that Telfer Doane and Blair were walking the deck, their cigars red points of fire in the night. He joined them, matching their long strides.

"I used to swim in the river all the time," Doane was saying. "It was the headquarters for all us boys, fifteen years ago. Do you swim, Mr. Blair?"

Blair said he did not; he was mountain raised and had never learned.

"It's a useful art to know," Telfer said. "What mountains are your home, Mr. Blair?"

"The Berkshires, Mr. Doane. This is strange country to me."

"Do you like it, sir?"

"No. It's—well, too raw yet."

"You have a business in the east then?"

"Insurance; I'm connected with insurance. But at the moment I'm on leave, sir."

Johns wondered why Doane did not offer the information that insurance was also his own business. But Telfer drew at his cigar and silently walked with them. Johns, at the fourth circuit of the deck, excused himself. He saw them march aft; then pause, their cigars still aglow, near the cool drafts which rose from the churning stern paddle.

Johns of course could not hear the conversation between the two men and quite forgot about them as he posted his log in his cabin—except to think, humbly, that he had misjudged Blair. He seemed a decent quiet traveler; certainly not a card shark as he had guessed.

DOANE leaned against the taffrail, the thunder of the paddle below strong in his ears.

"I did not want to speak before the captain," he said, his voice low and confidential, "because I think that he may be involved, Mr. Blair. People do not come to Indian territory for a rest. They come for a purpose. Yours, sir, might be to investigate a certain insurance situation concerning Atlas—or, possibly also Eastern Casualty and Risk. You see, I am in insurance too, sir."

"I know," Blair said flatly. "What makes you think that I am not merely traveling as I stated?"

"Your interest in our freight for one thing." Doane smiled. "I noticed that you checked our freight as it came aboard. Also what we have dropped at way landings. Did you find what you came for?"

Telfer tried to keep the anxiety from his voice. He was feeling again strongly, like the throb of an old wound, the pain in his belly. He felt quite sure that Blair was the operative of whom he had heard. Once in casual conversation Blair had used the term "actuary." That was strictly insurance language. Yes, Blair was insurance all right—and right—and that could concern himself seriously.

"I want to help, sir," Telfer said earnestly.

"I won't admit it," Blair smiled broadly, "but I'll say this: I might be interested in your views about this packet being involved in the case you refer to. You can understand that I am not free to talk, Mr. Doane."

"Naturally. Well, Blair, as territory agent, I've been investigating also. Captain Johns is an unwitting tool, that's all. The *Eagle* may be involved but I'd look lower down the river. In my opinion the brains of this scheme to defraud are down on the Mississippi, perhaps at St. Louis or even in Cairo."

Blair blew smoke into the paddle drafts and tossed his cigar into the froth of the wake. "I think not. My view is that the trail leads upriver, to Covington to be specific. I expect to find out when I reach there. This is why, Mr. Doane. . . ."

Telfer listened with apprehension. Blair was on the trail all right. His reconstruction of the case was sound. He needed but names and proof. He could get them at Covington. Not from Tiny Beldon, of course, but from some minor clerk, some freight handler or bookkeeper with itching fingers. Beyond Beldon, Blair would inevitably discover the name Telfer Doane. He would have ample time before St. Joseph acted on the ultimatum he carried; ample time to build a case against him.

Telfer drew in his stomach, stifling its hurt. He felt life and its events, its unpredictable predicaments, press heavily upon him. He needed time, just a little more time and Tiny Beldon would be dead and his own name forever in the clear. But life, seemingly, was not going to grant him that time.

"May I ask, Mr. Doane," Blair was saying, "how you knew that there was a scheme to defraud going on?"

Telfer did not answer. He should not have blurted that out. But now, stalling, he drew a cigar from his waistcoat and offered it to Blair.

"Smoke another, sir. This is a cool spot in which to talk."

"Obliged, Doane."

Blair bit the cigar end; then leaned into the sulphur match flame in Doane's cupped hands, sucking deeply.

Telfer Doane stole a glance forward. The deck was deserted.

"Draw hard. It's not lighted yet, sir."

Doane, his hands still cupped, pushed with his shoulder—suddenly—rolling Blair off balance. Blair toppled backward over

the low balustraded rail. Doane was upon him immediately, pushing him toward the edge of the deck. Blair cried out once, weakly, because Doane's fingers were at his throat. Telfer avoided the kicking boots, dragging Blair on his back. Suddenly he heaved and Blair slid into the dark river and the beating paddle drowned his long rattling scream.

Doane gazed into the muddy, disturbed waters, fighting down sudden retching nausea. He could see or hear nothing. Blair was gone.

"Oh, God!" Doane cried to himself and gripped the rail hard to stifle his trembling.

Then, suddenly steady, he ran forward. He was about to raise the cry, "Man overboard!" when he thought better of it. No, it was sure this way; the *Eagle* putting distance from the spot. Blair might swim a little, or he may have died. This way, alone in the eddies and currents, swimmer or not, he would never reach shore; Johns' rescuing yawl boat could not chance upon him still alive.

He slowed to a walk. *Get hold of yourself!* he gritted. *It's done and you're safe. Johns will find out tomorrow, of course—but it's anybody's guess—suicide, accident, who knows?*

At the stairway abeam the wheelhouse Doane paused to breathe the air. He kept his eyes ahead. Lon King hovered above him.

"Turning in, Mr. Doane? You'll wake up in Covington, sir."

"Good," Telfer said pleasantly. "Yes, I'm turning in. Good night, Mr. King." Then, raising his voice, he called, "Good night, Mr. Blair. I'll see you in the morning, sir."

He let himself into his cabin. Surprisingly, he promptly fell into dreamless sleep. But toward morning he awakened in a cold sweat. The killing of David Blair had not erased the trail; not surely. Wasn't it reasonable to suppose that Blair had left records, or copies of reports? Where? In his pockets? Perhaps. But wouldn't Blair place his valuables exactly

Suddenly he heaved and Blair slid into the dark river.

where he had placed his own? He could sleep no more. Telfer got up, took whiskey and lighted a cigar.

When the sun arced quickly over the eastern plains, flooding the land with clear crystal light, it brought no comfort to him. The trail of his one small crime, the simple affixing of his name to a few crooked insurance policies, was without end.

Now he must recover those incriminating records.

ONCE again Haines Butler was the river pilot, solving his problems as he came to them. Like successfully negotiated bars, Dutton and Tabor were behind him. But there were other bars ahead. Beldon, perhaps Stewart Harmon. Haines would judge them and drive through them when they appeared. Moses Pennel, however, he could not dismiss. Pennel was like an adverse current; he was present always. His fight with him was inactive now only because the *War Hawk* needed, beyond all other human talent, an Indian agent and a pilot. But someday he would settle with Pennel too. Pennel was the key man of the whiskey running and the defrauding of the tribes who had made their peace with the government. And there was that matter of looting and collecting false insurance. Haines had not given Sac's words much thought. But as he became more and more enmeshed in the very plot he was trying to expose, he sometimes wondered. Could it be Telfer Doane?

Again he decided against it. It was not a blind spot, as Sac had said. He could see Doane clearly—a lucky, honest operator, representing a legitimate and high class business. Eames Harris and Doc Leander could not be wrong about Doane—he was their trusted associate. Above all Beau Nash could not be wrong about him. That counted most.

Inevitably, then, he thought about Beau. He used to fetch her forty-dollar bouquets. He used to spend every evening of his layover in St. Jo with her. It had been fun—the dances, the traveling operas, the showboats which came from Memphis and Cairo, the quiet walks on the night prairie out toward Boot Spring and the cool cottonwoods there.

He had never asked her to marry him. He might have—because it was April when he discovered that he wanted to be with Beau forever—but the next week, arriving in St. Jo, Eames Harris had met him at the wharf and shown him the St. Joseph *Plain Dealer*. The announcement of her engagement was on page one. Haines had seen her only once since and Telfer had been with her. He said what was polite to say, feeling deeply the lie he was saying; then abruptly left them for the gaming table of the Stage House. After that there was nothing of Beau Nash in his life except Little Gil.

But he could not forget her. He could not forget those small things which were between himself and Beau—a thrilling brush of their hands, the look in her level gray eyes when she took from him Mr. Cordellier's fabulous blooms, the quiet possessive pride in her as she sometimes rode the wheelhouse settee while he spoked the *Cheyenne Belle* over her watery path. These things counted—these things counted as much as the spoken word. But he had failed to speak, feeling sure of himself, of her—and when he was ready to speak it was too late.

If Doane, now, about to care for Beau forever, was engaged in a dirty scheme to falsely collect insurance—No! That could not be. Just knowing Beau Nash would forbid a man ever trying it!

Moses Pennel cautiously entered the wheelhouse. Jesse Doran, in the fitful light of the greasewood bark burning in basket flares over the bows, was taking the *War Hawk* up shallow Medicine Arrow Creek. Shore willows brushed the packet. The channel ran brook-narrow on each beam for the creek was not wide and melted into boggy swamp on either hand. The hands were rigging the grasshopper spars again; Ally Reegan sweating at the niggerhead to which the spar tackles were rove.

"I've been talking to Sli and I'm satisfied with the change, Butler," Moses Pennel said. "I know you don't like me but we can get along together for what we have to do. I want to make it a truce."

Haines did not conceal his enmity. "We have to get along," he said. "That's why you're alive. I don't like you, Pennel, I don't like the way you think. Amos Tabor valued your Indian tongue and your position as agent. That's all I value in you and all I want of you. But don't ever get

stubborn with me the way you did with La Touche. All you had to do that night to save a life and perhaps prevent a war, was to give Two Kettles his goods—or the half he'd have gotten anyway."

"I made a mistake, Butler," Pennel said weakly. "We can get along."

"We can't," Haines snapped. "If we didn't need each other, we'd be packing guns for first shot. Now, get out of my way—Reegan's ready for me to heave her."

The two vertical spars on each bow were now buried in the same mud which bound the keel and powerful tackles from their upper ends to the deck and the steam winch had lifted the bow several feet above the surface of the water. Reegan, idle now, mopped his face and waited for the shock of grasshoppering. Haines rang full ahead. The ponderous paddle began to churn the water and mud of the creek. With half her weight supported by the spars, the *War Hawk,* now drawing but a few inches of water, slid slowly forward. She became a lazy, clumsy saurian, seeking water over a slimy ooze. The packet shook and quivered. Roots and waterlogged trunks spewed from her paddle buckets. Like the great dinasaurs which once waddled upon these very prairies, she lumbered forward. The tackles cried in agony and the great spars swung forward with her, pivoting upon their feet in the mud.

"She hoppers!" Reegan cried. "Hang on!"

With a tired sigh the *War Hawk* lunged ahead and fell with a shaking splash into the river. The spars hinged with her—exactly like a grasshopper hinges his powerful hind legs when jumping—the tackles fell slack and Haines stopped the paddle.

The vessel had slithered twenty feet through the mud.

"How does she draw?"

"Half less one, sir!"

"Rig up, Reegan. One more hop—there's clear creek ahead."

AGAIN the huge craft crawled on her flat belly over the shallows. Haines felt admiration strong upon him. These men, whatever else they might be, were superb steamboatmen. Reegan, Doran, Sli, Sod Hoyt, the bosun—yes, they were of that breed which pushed the steamboat along the new paths of exploration and conquest hard on the heels of the scouts and the trappers and the gold seekers. Even Amos Tabor had been one of them, and Milo Dutton. The foundations of their criminal organization lay in the steamboat, in their knowledge and mastery of the huge beast of wood and iron. No ordinary highwaymen these—with mastery over nothing but a dumb horse and a six-gun. What had Daniel Peck said? "If I were after a highwayman, I'd look for an honest man who could ride hard and shoot straight. The problem isn't much different here—except that the Missouri is our highway and you can't ride a horse on it!" Yes, that was it. He was of their breed and they of his. There was only one difference. His purpose was honorable. He was with them, one of them, leading them because he had earned their respect and trust. But they did not understand that he was different from them in this one degree.

"Camp wharf ahead, sir!"

Doran slowed the *War Hawk,* letting her drift across the still deep turn-around pool toward a timbered dock. A flare burned here, lighting the thick surrounding water growth in eerie light. Men were there; and beyond them pack animals. There were no greetings and it was as if two strange worlds were meeting in cold stellar space.

"The camp is on some island, deep in the swamp," Doran said. "I've never been there. They say you can ford to it—but I wouldn't want to try it in this ooze. Stew Harmon'll tote the goods in. You better explain it to him, Butler—about Amos, I mean."

"I expect to," Haines said. "Reegan and I will go ashore to see Harmon. Get below and start them unloading, Jesse."

Doran left. The packet lay beside the dock now and Sli's safeties were slobbering in the water oaks above them. Haines wished he had a gun. He knew practically nothing about Stew Harmon. Conceivably Harmon could himself want the job he had taken from Amos Tabor. Conceivably, Harmon could be nasty.

He went to his cabin for the gun. Here was the last link in the chain of evidence that Eames Harris and the commissioner wanted. Would it yield the top man? Would Stew Harmon prove to be the

wolf? Or was it Beldon? He would know soon and this part of his work would be finished. . .

He rummaged in his carpet bag. He found his belt, loose cartridges and holster. The gun itself he did not come upon at once. Annoyed, muttering a mild curse, he touched a match to the bulkhead lamp.

It was then, with his face strong against the new flame, that he heard the click of a gun hammer in the shadows behind him.

Haines swung, his fists doubling.

"Easy, Mr. Butler," a soft voice said. "You've been such a sensible gentleman so far. I boarded at Yankton, sir, and I'm delighted to emerge from that stuffy cabin on the boiler deck. Permit me, Mr. Butler. My name is Beldon, Tiny Beldon—I would value a talk with you, sir."

When Little Gil Nash first came to him as a cub, Haines remembered the lad's bubbling, joyous zest for living. He was only thirteen—high time to be in training, of course—but far from those years which would bestow upon him the maturity and judgment necessary for full-fledged piloting. Sometimes Haines used to be annoyed by Little Gil's—well, raw youth, he supposed it was. He had often tried a trick on the boy, adding a deliberate, calculated steeliness and hardness to his voice and it always amused him to notice how Little Gil sobered and minded his work when he used that tone. Little Gil never fumbled an order or never took the subject lightly when he spoke to him in that way.

Now, with Tiny Beldon smiling behind his own gun in the yellow lamplight, talking so softly and earnestly, Haines had the same feeling that he knew he had implanted in Little Gil. Beldon talked with a smooth politeness and grace but there was that same steeliness in his voice, that same ruthlessness and hardness which made a man understand that he did not speak lightly.

Tiny Beldon was tiny. He was seated but Haines estimated that he would not top sixty-six inches on his feet. His face was smooth and almost hairless, as if he had just begun to shave, and about it was a jovial quality that reminded Haines of a picture of the Christmas saint, Nicholas, which he once had seen in Westport. Beldon's hands, too, were smooth and almost feminine. His movements were quick and yet graceful and were it not for the sharp darting black eyes and that quality of voice, it would be natural for a man to judge him soft and weak. Which would have been a grievous, and sometimes fatal mistake indeed.

"SIT down, sir," Tiny Beldon said now and waved the gun. "I'm sorry to have to keep this aimed at you . . . but, in a way, sir, it tells you where you stand."

"I always liked that gun," Haines said. "I should have kept it on me."

"You should have indeed," Beldon nodded. "Always it is these small mistakes which undo a man. It was Amos Tabor's trouble, sir. But I warn you that you are not dealing with Tabor or any of his foolish boys now. To put it bluntly, sir—I quite see through you."

"So did Amos," Haines said and studied the gun. "He only wanted me until I had piloted him north."

"Granted," Beldon chuckled. "But Amos did not see all the way. He believed his eyes and his ears rather than easily-guessed facts. Men like yourself, sir, do not turn away from a legitimate service to join anything like this without sound reason. It wasn't money—you can command top wages on any western river. No—you have been climbing a ladder in regular pattern; Dutton, Tabor, Harmon. Obviously, you are after information. Obviously you have obtained considerable. You've seen so many thing, things which are dangerous to see, Mr. Butler. I'm really sorry that I could not tell you sooner—perhaps at Yankton where I boarded with the loafers and Indians from the store—but I was checking on the movements and motives of Captain Tabor and you were necessary to him then." Beldon sighed. "The only question remaining, sir, is how to dispose of you."

It was pronounced matter-of-factly and, oddly, Haines accepted it the same way. He was not surprised.

"Then let your hammer fall, Beldon," he grinned.

"I'm glad that you are not denying anything, sir. It shows good sense—and considerable bravery, if I may say so. I'm sorry that I can't shoot you, Mr. Butler. You see, I'm not angry at you—in fact, I quite admire you. But you are in my way and

I'll have to have you put out of my way. No—I think you'd always haunt me if I shot you in cold blood. Who is angry with you on board, Mr. Butler; who hates you?"

Haines grinned again and he noted that it seemed to annoy Tiny Beldon ever so slightly. "Moses Pennel hates me," he said.

"Ah, Pennell" Beldon cried. "I do believe you'd like to walk into the woods with Moses—and I have no doubt that, even unarmed, you'd be the one to return. I wouldn't mind greatly—except that I need Moses. My organization is top-heavy as it is. Every man in the West who can throw a bowline and has a past to hide, comes to work for me, it seems. I'd like to get rid of half of them—and I'm obliged for your help in disposing of Tabor and Milo Dutton. They meant well . . . but I fear that their trouble was in their thinking."

"Of course," Haines said. "You're having some of that trouble too, aren't you, Beldon?"

"Easy, Mr. Butler," a soft voice said. "You've been such a sensible gentleman so far."

"I?" Beldon seemed surprised.

"You, Beldon. Who is going to take you downriver? Jesse Doran? He'd strand you on the first shoal he came to."

"I'm sure he would." Beldon laughed, and Haines was disappointed in the effect of his remark. "But you see, Mr. Butler, I know the river quite as well as you do. In another trade I would be fully licensed. Yes—I'll take the *War Hawk* clear to Fort Benton, running only at night, and wager you a thousand dollars I'll never touch bottom. But, I forget," he sighed again, "you won't be with us, will you?"

Haines stretched. Once again he allowed himself a grin. "Oh, I expect I'll be around for a while yet, Beldon," he said softly and rose.

Beldon's voice was its steeliest: "Sit down, Butler!"

The gun barrel paused, lined with Haines' heart.

Haines looked at him coolly. He did not sit down. "I told you you weren't thinking, Beldon," he said. "That's my gun . . . and I never keep it loaded unless it's on me. Now, stand up yourself. I want the pleasure of knocking you down!"

He rushed at Beldon then, batting the empty gun out of his hand at the first charge. Beldon lunged to his feet, a midget beside him: all his aplomb and assurance gone. His face worked in smoking anger and Haines knew that he had hurt him in the one place in which such a man can be hurt. He had hurt his vanity; he had stabbed him in that enormous self-assurance!

"Pennel" Tiny Beldon yelled as he shielded himself. "Pennel! Sod! For God's sake—take him off me!"

Too late Haines understood that Beldon had guards outside the cabin. He reached for the lamp and threw it as Mases Pennel followed his gun into the sprung door. Behind him was Sod Hoyt and a burly deck hand. Haines struck blindly, felt his knuckles score bare flesh. A gun blazed but he felt nothing. He butted into Pennel, feeling the man's ribs sharp against his shoulder and Pennel fell backward into the confusion of kicking legs. Beldon, wedged into a corner, was screaming, "Lay him out, Sod! Crack him down, Sod!"

(Continued on page 144)

NINETY BLOWS A MINUTE

By
STEVE FRAZEE

ILLUSTRATED BY
CARL PFEUFER

HADN'T they seen the lads themselves, these tough-bodied Irishmen—the two thin-waisted striplings who were supposed to be the finest double-jack team from the deep mines up north? A fine pair, indeed, to send all the way from Butte to go on the rock against the brawny Irish boys from Victor, Colorado, for the world's championship rock drilling title. (Not that every meeting of any importance wasn't so billed.)

Victor was the Irish stronghold in the Cripple Creek mining district, which was an infant in years—a youngster with gold in its beard, whiskey on its breath and hair on its chest; a lusty, brawling brat

A FACT STORY

At the starter's gun, the lads from Butte went to work with terrific speed.

that demanded diversion and got in large doses, including an attempted bullfight near Gillett. The sheriff cried, "For shame, boys!" during that affair and led an army of deputies to impound the bull along with numerous slow-footed spectators. Ah, well, bullfighting was outlandish foreign stuff anyway!

Dearest of all (next to high-grading) to the miners' hearts were rock drilling contests, especially double-handed competition. Now there's the real article for you! Something you do every day yourself down in the gold mines.

So bet what we got left, Terry. These Butte lads look too small.

They were small in their street clothes, the larger weighing a frail 180. Stripped to their waists on the rock they still looked small beside the huge and powerful Irishmen who were the drilling pride of Victor. Some spectators, especially those from Cripple Creek, who bore no love for Victorites anyway, put their choice and money on the Butte lads. They pointed out such items as the long, flat muscles and deep chests on the Montana drillers, their record up where men mined copper and the fact that the Butte boys neither smoked nor drank.

Borrow some money and bet, Terry. They're a pair of kids away from home the first time.

THE Butte lads hadn't come alone. There was money to back them. While the contestants drew from a hat to determine which red-painted four inch square on the granite block would mark their drilling start, a rumor developed that a Montana copper magnate had offered $10,000 on his boys. The crowd took a closer look at the slender drillers. Ah, well . . . copper came easy like gold. Only you had to have more of it. Another rumor, stirred to life in the hard-to-trace manner of all scuttlebutt, said Burns and Doyle, Victor mine owners, had covered the bet and raised it. The Irish went wild.

Borry some more money, Terry, me boy!

Each team had a set of fifteen drills, each succeeding steel approximately three inches longer than the last one. Each man had a double-jack, an eight-pound hammer with a thirty-inch handle—a commonplace tool that became powerful and precise when used in skilled hands. There was a swamper whose job was to keep water running into the hole to mud the cuttings.

In addition to that equipment all the drillers needed were incredible skill and stamina to twist and pound their $\frac{7}{8}$-inch steel into granite at an approximate speed of three inches per minute for fifteen minutes.

The Irish drilled first.

One man held the steel and turned. The striker delivered terrific over-the-shoulder blows, eighty a minute after the hole was collared. Hammerman and turner exchanged places every half minute, clocked by their own timekeeper. So quick and smooth was the shift that if you glanced over your shoulder to see who was jostling, you looked back to see a different hammerman sending the steel deeper into hard rock. During the exchange of places each man hit the drill twice while no hands held it. Twice was the legal limit for the man who was going from striking to twisting. Muddy water flew high, splashed the drillers' bare chests and sweating arms. And the hole went deeper.

A fresh drill went in every minute, the used one flung high over the heads of the crowd. The man changing steel had less than a second to draw the used drill, get rid of it and slam a sharp one to the bot tom of the hole before the hammer came down with unslackened power and unbroken rhythm. During his last stint at striking each man whipped the double-jack up and down with all his power and speed.

The timekeeper blasted with a .44 Texas pistol and the hammerman leaned on the handle in near exhaustion. Judges measured and the crowd pressed hard against the staging.

"Forty-two and three-eighths inches!"

There was joy in Mudville—also Victor. The mark was far from a world's record, a matter of inches being very far in rock drilling, but it was a hard one to beat.

The Butte lads went on the rock, grinning at jibes and jeers and friendly taunts. At the starter's gun they went to work with terrific speed. They lacked the brute force of their opponents, but they hit steel at the rate of ninety blows per minute and their precision in changing places was beautiful to watch.

"Jay-zus! Look at thim little daubers go!"

After seven minutes, when it was apparent that the Butte drillers were going to hold the pace, the crowd cheered them.

They lost by an eighth of an inch.

Up went the familiar robbery uproar. The Irish charged the malcontents with being largely from Butte and Cripple Creek. Butte bettors said the result would have been different in Montana. A few skulls were cracked. Judges and whoever else could get close measured and remeasured the holes. Miners knocked each other off the rock in their eagerness to prove something. The decision stood.

Bets were paid and the saloons prospered. No reveler gave a second thought to the few ponderous steam drills being tried in the granitic bowl that was the Cripple Creek district. In other Western camps cumbersome air or steam drills were being developed pragmatically. But hammers and the brawny arm were still supreme. Drink up, Terry! We'll have another contest soon.

THERE was no association to compile records. Brittle newspapers and oldtimers' memories are all that today record the names and marks of champions in those spectacular and grueling contests which were the direct outgrowth of daily work. There were mucking contests too, in which squat, broad-backed men shoveled rock in an almost steady stream. But contests failed to glorify the shovel. Mine owners sponsored and encouraged drilling contests, though no man ever accused them of being artless enough to think their crews would compete underground to see who could turn out the best day's work.

There were two classes of drilling, identical with the two ways miners worked underground: single-jacking and double-jacking. A single-jacker turned and struck his own steel for the full fifteen minutes, using the official four-pound hammer in major contests. Five-pound hammers were legal under the ground rules in lesser competition. It was the double-jack work that brought roars from the crowd. No loose swinging blows with one hand sliding leisurely along the handle to ease the upstroke; but rapid-fire precision jolts powered only by shoulders and arms. One not in the best of condition couldn't last a half minute.

Standard rock for world championship contests was Gunnison, Colorado granite. It was considered the most uniformly hard of all rocks tried. Its unvarying composition offered the best chance for an even break for all contestants. There are harder rocks than Gunnison granite and in local contests men broke their hearts and steel against them. Four-inch squares were painted on the rock; contestants drew from a hat to determine their position. If, thirty inches down, you struck a brutally-hard intrusion it was your tough luck and nature's fault.

No team was better than its steel. Drills for double were $\frac{7}{8}$-inches in diameter, made of octagon bar. Some drillers had their steel turned down smooth. Others preferred the octagon sides to facilitate gripping while turning. Drills had to be true or they would bind in the hole under the hammer's terrible pressure. Their chisel type bits were gauged to a thousandth of an inch, sometimes decreasing slightly in width until the last steel used had a bit no wider than the bar. Forming contest bits and tempering, especially the latter, were arts that leading blacksmiths performed in secret, like mysterious alchemists. Hard water, soft water, buttermilk, swamp water, tepid water, cold water, wild pigeon milk—each had his special liquid for plunging steel.

The longer and thinner a bit was the faster it cut—and the more likely it was to break. A bit corner broken in a hole meant that one team might as well sit down and watch the boys go. They could chew up that piece of steel with following drills, but that would also chew up the new bits.

You had to have good drills. They were shaped, trued, tempered, polished and calipered with loving care.

Look at your steel in the hole during a contest: The hammer comes down dead center on the drill head, the contact point being an area you could cover with a worn dime.

The bit cuts a few hundredths of an inch into hard granite. The turner twists the drill an eighth of a revolution, churning it a little to help free cuttings and mix them with water the swamper is directing into the hole from a small tube. The hammer descends again—it's coming down every two-thirds of a second perhaps. You

turn the drill again. If the striker is hitting true and you're twisting in uniform arcs and holding dead center in the hole you're getting a round bore in solid granite at a good clip. If the hammerman's blows are wandering all over the drill head —it's 7/8 of an inch across—some of their power is being dissipated in side thrust and a bit may break.

You have to work in delicate harmony with the striker, for if he can't hit that shiny dime every lick or if you get a hole pointed off toward Mrs. Gilhooley's stable, all of a sudden your drill will sound its *twung!* and will remain in the hole until the granite molders in dust away. It takes only a slight inaccuracy in holding your steel to cause the following drill to bind. Then you're a bum—unless you can convince the blacksmith he fouled you up. If you can make an oldtime mine smith even listen to you, you're wasting your time as a driller. Anyway, the contest will be over then and somebody else will be buying drinks with the purse you were after.

When you start to change steel, heave that drill out of the hole fast. If it fractures someone's head out in the crowd that's too bad. You have less than a second to hoist the steel straight up, deep six it with one hand, while your other hand is jamming the following drill clear to the bottom of the hole and the hammer is coming down. You can't let the hammerman break his stride. In a few seconds it will be your turn to strike.

You never think about that heavy hammer hitting all those wallops less than a half-inch from your hand, which is very close to solid granite. If you thought about it you wouldn't be worth a dime at drilling. And when you're striking if you're afraid of hitting your partner's hand he'd better leave fast—because that's exactly what you will do. A near miss that bounces from the drill head will only cripple for a time. A complete miss will buckle all the bones across the back of the hand or, if it strikes the fingers, will plaster the rock with red and gray pulp.

Now it's time to change. Let go of the drill, grab your hammer and get to your feet. Your partner will strike the drill twice while you're doing that. You'll get two licks at the steel while he's going down to turn. In the process, called "fostering," you actually gain one stroke.

There were giants in the sport.

Ed Chamberlain and Carl Maka made the best double-jack mark ever recorded in Gunnison granite. At Bisbee, Arizona, in 1903, they went 46 5/8 inches in fifteen minutes. In an unusual exhibition at Hancock, Michigan, in 1911, Kinsella and McLean lacked less than one inch of sinking steel five feet into Vermont granite in fifteen minutes. It was not a contest. A third man held the drill and they both struck.

Sell Tarr was the ruler in straight-a-way drilling, a contest in which one man did all the hammer work without relief. Without extending himself Tarr drilled 38 5/8 inches into Gunnison granite in fifteen minutes.

At Bisbee, in 1903, Fred Yockey used a four-pound hammer and 3/4-inch steel to single-jack 26 3/4 inches into Gunnison granite in fifteen minutes. He struck 140 blows per minute, turning steel with two fingers. Those who had never seen Yockey drill didn't believe he could maintain such speed when he first started. His drills were longer than the average contestant used and his hammer handle much shorter than the eighteen-inch length used by slower, more powerful hammerman. He was striking faster near the end of the time limit. His mark has never been beaten in Gunnison granite.

Yockey had practiced from the time he was a youth to develop a striking rhythm and precise skill in turning.

MEN who remember rock drilling in its heyday still argue about the excellence of teams and individuals. Because the same texture of rock was not used in all contests and because there was no subsidization which might have brought outstanding drillers from one end of the Rockies to the other together for regular meets—such speculation ranks with: Who would have won if Dempsey and Louis had met when both were at their best?"

Men like Bill Ross and Jack McIver were hard to beat. Then there were McKenzie and Treweik, of Leadville, Colorado, a tough and roaring camp; Sell Tarr and his brother Hank, Idaho Springs, Colorado; Linquist and Lumberg, Ouray, Colorado—of course they were called the "Terrible Swedes." McLean and Kinsella,

who punctured Vermont granite as if it were sandstone in their Michigan exhibition, were standouts in the Coeur d'Alene district of Northern Idaho; so were Bill Page and Jim Pickens of the same area. Walter Bradshaw, Butte, Montana, teamed with different men to form one of the most potent combinations in the wild and woolly West.

In single-jacking there were men like O. M. King, Dick Connally and Bob Lyons. It was Connally whom Yockey deposed at Bisbee.

King of modern days in single competition is Fred Dopp, Jamestown, Colorado, who drilled 21 inches at the Golden Gate Exposition in San Francisco in 1940. That was done in fifteen minutes. His best mark is 18½ inches in ten minutes. Figured on an inch-per-minute basis that record would excel Yockey's, but there is no honest means of comparing their work. Dopp started drilling in 1905.

Every camp had its heroes. Perhaps their marks never approached world records but they had their following because it was the competition that counted. The news that hardrockers were going to drive steel into granite in a coming celebration pulled miners from every camp and crag within news range. Labor Day and the Fourth of July were two prime holidays for jamborees where men could enjoy much friendly drinking, a little shooting, cutting, foot-racing, boxing and the supreme event—rock drilling. Saloonmen and merchants did not overlook the desirability of drawing crowds to town—men whose pockets burned with a month or two of wages earned in rock bores by flickering candlelight.

There were purses and prizes for those who drilled and won—and for those who lost.

Contest drilling was a science. Men who could turn out rounds of thirty-inch holes with either single-jack or the larger hammer day after day underground didn't leap directly from their daily task to the rock for contest work. They all could turn and strike from any position—straight up for an overhead hole, horizontally for what were termed top or back holes (seldom demanded by any shifter with good sense), or sidewise while lying prone in tight stopes.

But for the peculiar requirements of contest drilling they had to practice hard, sometimes for years to rank among the best. And they had to train—on their own time after work, unless the team was among the fortunate few who had snagged purses enough to live without going underground. No champion trained on liquor; neither did smoking mix well with drilling. It took a lot of oxygen to pound steel eighty or ninety whacks a minute.

TEAMS generally practiced in secret, so that no one could observe their skill and power. Sometimes they ran for miles through the mountains to build up wind—after work. Perhaps they practiced for an hour, particularly changing steel and shifting positions. If they made a trial run to test their drilling rate they dropped a short started drill into the hole after finishing so that no curious person might measure what they had scored. When it came time for the contest each driller's friends knew what the score was and bet accordingly. Competitors bet on themselves to boost the take in case they won. They were out to win, too. No one ever charged that a contest had been thrown.

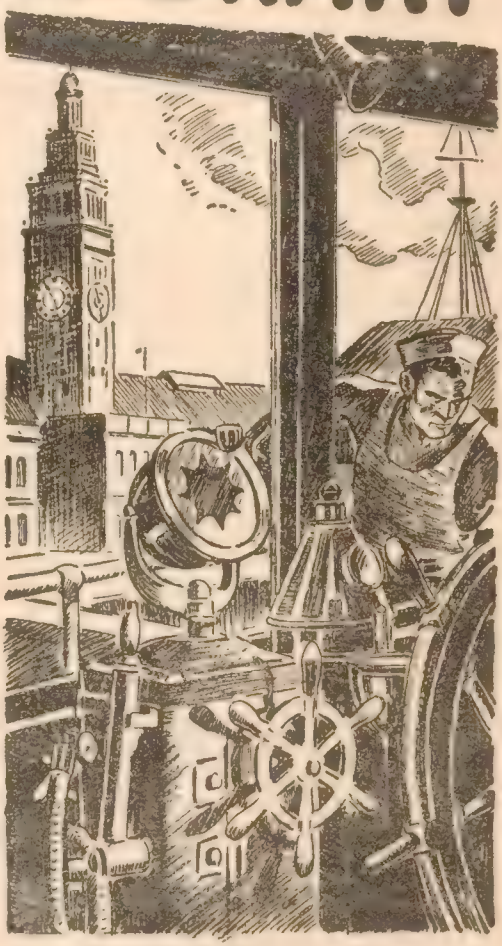
Refinements in drilling occasionally appeared. Now and then a contestant used a belt instead of fuse to hold up trousers. Some drillers introduced rubber splashers to keep the water and cuttings from geysering out of the hole and making drillers and close-pressed watchers appear to have just crawled out of a swamp.

Mechanical drills were crowding hard long before 1910, but there was still much handwork and thousands of miners who had learned how to strike steel with a hammer. From El Paso to Spokane drilling contests were still popular. Purses were never high, seldom exceeding $2,000. However, the side betting was wide-open.

Today in the West the rodeo has taken over and there are few places left where rock drilling forms a part of local celebrations, mainly because there are few men left who have ever done rock drilling by hand. As one oldtimer in Ophir, Colorado, recently deplored: "There ain't no miners left. All the kids have gone away to be drugstore cowboys."

Like the Greek discus thrower, the mighty athletes of hammer and steel are gone.

TEMPORARY



ILLUSTRATED BY V. E. PYLES

IT TOOK a bit of trouble in Latitude 22° 12′ north to confirm Chief Mate Charlie Hadley's suspicion that Captain Larson's flair for publicity was something more than just an irritating quirk of character. It was a means to an end. And the end was the furtherance of Peter Larson's carefully charted career.

The revealing incident occurred two days out of Hilo on the great circle to Stateside. It was there, in an empty mile of placid Pacific, that the freightship *Adelaide* dropped her rudder. A mile straight down.

The first that young Charlie Hadley knew about it was when the unnatural silence of the big reciprocating engine woke him from his nap during his watch below. He sat up, knuckling the sleep from his sun-faded eyes. He heard anxious

SKIPPER

By STEVE HAIL

Charlie lashed out with a savage blow that had the weight of long anticipation behind it.

footsteps clumping down the ladder from the upper bridge and then Second Mate John Kearney, whose watch it was, was pounding on the door.

Kearney's usually voluble mouth was tight-lipped with poorly concealed worry. "Lost the rudder," he announced shortly. "The Old Man wants you on the bridge."

Charlie grunted and reached for his pants. The sound was more an expression of annoyance than of concern. After all, it was flying fish weather, and though there was a long, powerful swell pushing down before the Northeast Trades, there wasn't much of a sea. The *Adelaide* was in no danger. Of course, being a single screw ship, she couldn't keep any kind of a course, so they'd have to summon tugs and be towed back to drydock. It meant delay, but that was all. It was almost

routine on these work-worn carriers of the sugar trade.

So Charlie said, "It might be worse, John. It could've been the bottom." His mouth widened in his easy-going grin and he flipped his battered uniform cap onto the back of his neck. He climbed to the wheelhouse to see what gave.

CAPTAIN LARSON was pacing the bridge wing with steps stately beyond his years. Charlie, seeing that deliberate gait and the severity of the drawn brows, recalled Kearney's strange and sudden taciturnity. His grin died.

"Yes, sir?" he asked cautiously.

The captain pushed his chin forward, almost challengingly. "I've radioed the Coast Guard for help, Mr. Hadley. If you'll break out all hands, we'll get on with rigging a jury rudder."

Charlie digested the order. "Coast Guard?" he asked at last, unbelievingly. "Jury rudder? Why, we'll be under tow tomorrow. A lot of junk strung out astern will only foul things up."

"I assume you heard me, Mr. Hadley?" Larson's blue eyes snapped. His cap was cocked a bit over one of them, just enough to let the sunlight catch the untarnished gold on the visor. His thumbs were hooked in the pockets of his uniform coat in the approved newsreel manner.

Charlie's arched eyebrows said, "Oh." Eloquently. But he waited a moment, then said aloud, "Yes, sir," very coldly, and started for the ladder.

He caught abruptly at a stanchion as a swell rolled under the freighter and beyond, almost burying the rail. He turned back to Larson and tried once more. "Somebody'll get hurt, working with heavy gear in this swell." He remembered just in time and added, "sir."

The captain didn't answer. He didn't have to. His frosty eyes spoke for him. Already they had that stern look of command behind them. He was a relief skipper, a shipmaster now for nearly a year.

Nobody said anything for awhile.

Charlie shrugged finally. Well, he had tried. He went aft to call the bosun.

The night's backbreaking labor proved the *Adelaide's* chief mate a prophet, if that was any satisfaction. Someone did get hurt. He, Charlie Hadley, broke an arm. Worse, a young deck boy was killed. Crushed while unshipping a cargo boom in the punishing swell.

And when the rescue cutters took them in tow the next day, the deck gang spent an hour in chopping away the gear they'd spent the long night rigging. The Coast Guard skipper said all that junk strung out astern would only foul things up.

Other than that the towing project gave them little difficulty. After three uncomfortable but otherwise uneventful days the *Adelaide* was docked in Honolulu.

Captain Larson, with becoming modesty, told the reporters about the hell at sea. His picture was in the papers, with the salty rake to his cap above an engagingly weary smile. He got himself some headlines and a promotion by radio from San Francisco to permanent command.

On the strength of his broken arm, Charlie Hadley got himself a transfer—and a full night's rest for the first time in four days. He hoped, as he lay down finally, that the deck boy who had been killed was an orphan.

The second day in the hospital Charlie heard a familiar step in the linoleumed corridor. John Kearney came into the room. His careless smile was back.

"How's the busted flipper?" Kearney asked.

Charlie said, "I'm lucky. It's bad enough to keep me from sailing with Larson. I've been transferred to the *Holyoke*. She's a bulk sugar carrier. Experimental. First one of its kind. A swing around the islands—then Stateside in a month or so."

"You get the skipper's berth?"

Charlie smiled wryly. "Mate. Always a bridesmaid, that's me. Maybe in a couple more years . . . A Captain Kyle got the command."

Kearney glowered. "You got more time in this outfit than Kyle—or Larson either, for that matter. You should've had the *Adelaide* in the first place." His fingers tapped reflectively on the enameled footrail of the bed. "Maybe Larson's got something, Charlie. He's always spouting about how the home office forgets a man once he's at sea. Got to remind 'em you're alive, he says. Now you, if you'd sound off once in a while, maybe old Pollard, the port captain'd—"

The quick frown above Hadley's eyes stopped him, but Charlie himself said nothing. Kearney was right in a way. A little publicity never hurt any ambitious young officer, but gambling lives against self-advancement was something else again. Like Larson and his . . . Charlie made himself forget about the captain of the *Adelaide*. He was a sailor and he was willing to leave the politics to those who knew about such things. Nevertheless, his one good hand clenched tight beneath the bed covers. He changed the subject.

"When you sailing for Frisco, John?" he asked.

"Me?" Kearney arced a thumb inward. "Same time as you, of course."

"You crazy? The *Adelaide'll* be under way again before the week is out."

"Who said anything about the *Adelaide?*" Kearney demanded indignantly. "I don't have any busted bones, but I got scruples—and a winning way with female personnel clerks. I got assigned to the *Holyoke.*"

Charlie shook his head sadly, but there was warmth in his eyes for the first time in several days.

CHIEF MATE HADLEY got his command sooner than he expected, although the way it came about wasn't much satisfaction to him.

The *Holyoke* was stopping off at a southern island outport when Captain Kyle went ashore in the plantation launch on ship's business. He didn't return. A message arrived from Honolulu instead. A splay-footed Kanaka rowed it out to the anchorage from the dock office.

Charlie snapped sweat from his forehead and read:

ADVISED CAPTAIN KYLE INJURED IN DOCK ACCIDENT. TO BE FLOWN HERE FOR OBSERVATION. NO RELIEF MASTERS AVAILABLE. SAN FRANCISCO AUTHORIZES YOU TO ASSUME TEMPORARY COMMAND FOR DURATION OF VOYAGE.

John Kearney, reading over Charlie's shoulder, thrust out his jaw. "Temporary!" he snorted. "Big of 'em! Too bad we ain't headed for Zanzibar 'stead o' Frisco." He added with seeming irrelevance, "Clippers must be grounded."

Charlie looked up. "Planes?" he asked, puzzled. "Grounded?"

"Sure," Kearney said with fine sarcasm. "Otherwise they'd have flown Pete Larson down pronto. He's in Frisco by now and a fair-haired boy like him don't pass up opportunities like this. Think of the headlines—*CAPTAIN LARSON IN DARING FLIGHT TO RELIEVE AILING SKIPPER.*" He launched into his favorite subject. "Now, if you'd speak up once in a while, Charlie—Cap, I mean—'stead of always saying 'yes sir,' to every—"

Charlie waved his hand. "Stow it, John," he said wearily. "It'll work out."

"Yeah, like with Larson. He's prob'ly got his feet cocked on Pollard's desk, making like a confidential adviser."

Charlie said, "We've got a trip to make. Let's get this hooker to sea."

So Charlie Hadley had his command, even if it was a fluke and for short duration.

The plodding *Holyoke* got her anchor up and settled down to the task of putting two thousand odd miles of ocean under her counter. She did it grudgingly but uneventfully and the morning of the tenth day out found them off Frisco entrance. The lightship was only an unseen source of dots and dashes guiding them shoreward through a black pall of fog.

The radioman came into the chartroom with a reply to their arrival announcement.

Captain Hadley at the direction finder racked the earphones and read aloud:

PROCEED CLAY STREET PIER, NORTHSIDE, AT 1400 SLACKWATER. CAPTAIN LARSON WILL BOARD YOU IN STREAM FOR DOCKING. SIGNED, POLLARD.

John Kearney said disgustedly, "Him again!"

Charlie just grunted, but after he'd pocketed the message he walked out into the bridge wing, letting the chill wind cool the warmth of resentment rising in his neck. The port captain evidently didn't even credit him for having ability enough to dock his own ship . . .

The lightship was ahead then, her red hull looming bright in the gray mists and as welcome as a fireside. Charlie forgot about Captain Peter Larson in the nerve strain of picking out the buoyed lane into the bay.

They were off Alcatraz by one o'clock. The fog had burned away before the noontime sun, and the company launch was backing and filling impatiently alongside.

Charlie stopped the engines.

Captain Larson clambered up the pilot ladder and made his way to the bridge. The ice in his eyes was even colder than Charlie remembered.

Larson didn't say, "Your ship looks good, Captain." Or even, "Have a good crossing?" He said, "You're late. We've missed slack water."

Charlie knew about the advantages of docking when the tide was at a stand, and the difficulty of making a landing in the ebb that boiled past the waterfront like a spring freshet. But it was a thing a competent shipmaster allowed for and accepted. You didn't pout about it.

He let Larson's surliness pass. He said patiently, "It was pretty thick outside. We had to feel our way in on a slow bell."

In the bridge wing, John Kearney's mouth was working. It wasn't from the cut plug in his cheek. He started to say something, thought better of it and spat viciously at a hovering gull. He missed and swore bitterly under his breath.

Charlie recognized the signs. "Get for'ard, Mr. Kearney," he said sternly. "Break out your anchors, and have a headline ready. With this tide we'll probably have to run it to the dock with the launch."

He turned to Larson. "She's all yours, Cap."

Larson nodded curtly in acceptance of the command. "Half ahead," he ordered. He motioned the helmsman to starboard. The *Holyoke* gathered way.

Larson handled the freighter with an easy confidence, although to Charlie it looked as if their approach was angled a little too broadly across the tide.

THE problem was simple enough, given proper forethought and cool judgment. The dock lay east and west at right angles to the northward running tide. Having been assigned to the north side of the berth, the vessel didn't have the corner of the pier to pivot on. The thing to do, Charlie knew, was to approach from the north, breasting the current, then drop the starboard anchor to swing on.

With a headline run to the wharf meanwhile by the launch to hold the ship's head up, the *Holyoke,* on a hard down rudder and engine thrusting slow ahead, should pivot on the anchor cable like a chained dog circling a stake and slide easily alongside. The maneuver was almost routine.

Charlie felt a momentary twinge of concern at the memory of that word. Routine! There had been another time on another ship not so long ago when Larson . . . But the other's next words reassured him.

"Drop your starboard anchor, Mister Mate!" Larson called out to Kearney on the foc'slehead. "Run your headline anytime."

Sparks leaped from the wildcat. The heavy chain thundered out the hawsepipe.

Charlie watched the launch dart in under the other bow to pick up the eye of the headline that Kearney had ready. It hung now just above the water. Things were going well enough, Charlie thought with grudging admiration. He let his eyes pass on to the pier. He was mildly surprised to see a small crowd waiting there. An odd reception for a dirty sea tramp. He even saw what appeared to be the tripods of cameramen and . . . Well, he'd find out soon enough. They were coming in fast.

Too fast, he realized suddenly. His head snapped around, his eyes darting to the telegraphs. The engine was on half speed. Charlie opened his mouth to offer a word of caution.

Larson said, "Tide's really cooking. She won't come around on a slow bell. Had to rev her up a little."

Charlie glanced at the rudder indicator. Larson was right. The helm was hard down, but the *Holyoke* wasn't answering. Then in a sudden flash of understanding he saw what had happened. Larson's approach hadn't been sharp enough. The tide had set them down broadside over the anchor and well beyond.

The chain was leading under the keel and past the other bow. For all the good it was doing the big hook might as well have been fashioned of wood, the chain a cotton string. The *Holyoke* was plough-

ing dead ahead, gathering way fast straight for the dock.

Larson cursed and cuffed the telegraphs ahead to Full, trying to force the ship's head around.

Charlie's heart leaped. He cried, "For God's sake, back her down!"

Larson, his lips pale in the sudden realization of his mistake, wrenched the telegraphs to Full Astern. He stood unmoving then, except for an uncontrolled trembling of his head.

They were less than fifty yards off, Charlie saw now, with the corridor of open water closing fast. No, not fast, but with the inexorable, relentless momentum of a lava flow. The backing propeller was chewing madly, biting in. It might as well have been an eggbeater. A full-laden ship doesn't stop, or even turn, in fifty yards. They were going up Clay Street, no less. High and dry. The *Holyoke* and the waterfront bus. Unless . . .

Both men remembered then in the same instant. The port anchor. Drop it, hang on and pray. Even if it didn't stop them entirely, it would slew them around, give them a glancing impact instead of a disastrous crash.

But Charlie saw why they couldn't. Kearney was gesticulating wildly on the foc'slehead, pointing downward at the waterline directly below the anchor. There, fouled someway or other in the dangling headline, was the launch. The crew of three were struggling frantically to free themselves.

In those few lifelong seconds Charlie was aware of a strange thankfulness pulsing through him, a natural relief that he wasn't in command. This was the end of the line for a shipmaster. Finished with engines. Well, the responsibility was Larson's. He, Charlie Hadley, was in the clear.

Then, across the wheelhouse, Larson, with the hard light of decision in his eyes, raised a hand to Kearney in the signal to drop the anchor.

Charlie stared unbelievingly. The warm flush of his relief was no longer that, but coursing ice. Peter Larson was running true to character as he had on the *Adelaide*. Only this time it was three lives instead of one that were to be sacrificed to his career.

Charlie Hadley came erect. He knew now what he had to do. He took recourse in the one inviolate law of his profession: A master relinquishes his command to no one, except by his own expressed consent.

Well, he had turned the *Holyoke* over to Larson a little while before. So now he'd take it back. It was as simple as that.

He cupped his hands and cried out to Kearney, "Hold it, John! Hold on—and stand clear!"

Charlie had seen the startled incredulity on the mate's face at Larson's first command. Now the frown dissolved. John Kearney raised a circled thumb and forefinger. Charlie sighed and turned to Larson. "I relieve you, Captain," he said. "I'm taking over."

EVEN as he braced himself for the impact, he had a fleeting glimpse of Kearney standing spraddle-legged on the forward deck. A fire ax was in his hand, and a wide grin on his face. For the launch was backing clear at last, trailing the severed line.

They were on the dock then and into it, with all of the *Holyoke's* ten thousand tons behind them. Pilings splintered like kindling as the blunt bows ploughed into the dockshed. Steel plates, crumpling, were like so much cardboard.

The freighter stopped finally, a third of her length wedged into the pier. Charlie rang the engines down to Stop. A twisted smile touched his lips and he moved the pointer on to Finished With Engines. The *Holyoke* wouldn't be going anywhere for awhile.

Larson loosed his shaking grip on the grab rail. He said, "Let's not forget you were in command, Hadley." He nodded at the stunned helmsman. "I have a witness to that."

"So you have," Charlie agreed. He waved the seaman toward the door.

When they were alone, Charlie said, "It's not like the other time, is it, Larson? No headlines in the papers, or pictures. Just a damn fool accident—and a suspended license for a year or so."

The words were coming fluently now for close-mouthed Charile Hadley. And there was a hardness to them that wiped the flush of triumph from Larson's cheeks. "Now look, Hadley," he began. "I—"

Charlie stopped him. "Let me finish. You're in the clear, it looks like. This was an accident like the other, only this was caused by personal error. Yours. It'll cost a skipper his job, of course. Mine. But that's all right. Nobody got killed."

He regarded Larson thoughtfully. "Still," he went on, "you're anything but a hero. The papers won't be wanting your photograph—so this won't matter much."

He stepped forward quickly and lashed out with his fist in a savage, slashing blow that had the weight of long anticipation behind it. It landed flush where the engaging smile should have been but wasn't.

Charlie surveyed the starting trickle of blood on Larson's chin, then shook his head, dissatisfied. He had it then and grinned, and threw another punch. This one connected just below the eye, the austere, frosty blue eye. That was better. Charlie thought the effect should be good, given an hour or two.

Larson lay where he fell, in a heap.

Charlie went below to await a summons from the port captain. Unhurriedly. There was no rush. He'd be here for a time, the way things looked.

Pollard's call wasn't long in coming. Charlie sighed and pulled on his coat.

The port captain sat in his swivel chair, his paunch touching the edge of the desk and his pale eyes as cold as arctic spray. John Kearney was already there. And Larson, with his mouth swollen below a coloring eye.

Pollard drummed the desk with his fingertips and leveled his brittle eyes on Charlie. "Before the Steamboat Inspectors take action on this affair," he began, "I want your story."

Charlie nodded at Larson. "I imagine everything's been told," he said. "I take full responsibility. I guess that's all there is to tell."

He was aware of a fierce frown of disapproval bracketing John Kearney's eyes. He grinned and tried again. "I was in command when the vessel struck, sir. I had relieved Captain Larson. I—I . . ." It was no good. Charlie let it drop.

POLLARD'S eyes were kinder than they might have been. "I know, Hadley. I've pieced it all together pretty well from what I saw from the dock, and from Captain Larson's report, and the helmsman's and Kearney's, here."

His eyes were half closed, regarding his cradled fingertips. Then he leaned forward suddenly, and his voice was vibrant with the demanding tone that went back to his own years of command. "Why was Larson docking the *Holyoke,* Hadley?"

Charlie felt his jaw sag downward. "Why?" he asked, not understanding. "Why, because—"

Larson broke in. "I told you, sir," he said hotly. "Hadley turned the ship over to me as soon as . . ."

"I was questioning Mr. Hadley," Pollard interrupted acidly. His eyes swung back to Charlie. "Why?" he repeated sharply.

Charlie stared at the port captain. "Why, your radiogram, sir, advising me that Captain Larson was to dock the vessel." He fumbled in his pocket for the half-forgotten message.

"Ah!" said Pollard. "The radiogram. May I see it, please, Mr. Hadley?"

He smoothed the proffered communication blank on the table. After a moment he looked up. He spoke with disarming softness. "The message as I worded it," he said slowly, "read: 'Captain Larson will board you in stream for docking *instruction.*' "

He cleared his throat. "It's been my opinion for some time that Captain Larson here could do with some schooling in ship handling from a level-headed master. That's why I sent him abroad. As an observer, mind you. Not as pilot. It appears the message was altered in transit to suit Captain Larson's grandstanding complex—a quality that I have suspected for a long time, and a dangerous one in a shipmaster."

Pollard leaned back, his eyes closed, thinking aloud. "The reason is plain enough, I think. The *Holyoke,* being an experimental bulk carrier in the trade, drew a modest amount of interest from the press. There were to be photographs and interviews. And . . ."

His words faded off and his cold eyes flashed open and came to rest on Peter Larson. "It will be interesting to learn just how, and by whom, that message was changed. I think a C Board investigation will bring it out."

(Continued on page 145)

HIGH SIERRAS

By Norman H. Sokolow

Here, inches from the clouds, a man can suck his fill
Of the keen clean breezes and the resin-pungent pines.
He can pass the time of day with the gabby little rill
Cascading through the canyon in criss-cross lines,
Where the vagabond of old pitched his tent with an eye
To the nuggets in the ground and the gold in the sky.

Retreat of the miner,
The raw forty-niner,
Toting his knapsack and pick.
He was wild as a burro,
But his panning was thorough—
His back had a bone and a crick!

Here are places that he knew where the water fights the rocks,
As men fight one another over faction, creed and rule;
And places further on where the water gently talks,
As friend to deepest friend, while it broadens to a pool.
As the rocks sink from sight, the surface smooths to glass,
Mirroring eternally the granite, groves and grass.

Though a miner panned pay-dirt,
Or nothing but gray dirt,
He'd something to show beside ore:
The feel of these spaces,
Reflecting God's faces—
A glimpsing of truth at the core!

DECORATION BY L. STERNE STEVENS

DECORATION BY ROGER L. THOMAS

In the snow were the tracks of a giant biped.

SNOWMAN'S LAND

By VINCENT H. GADDIS

IT WAS in a snow-covered pass in the lofty Himalayas, near Bhyundar Valley and located 16,500 feet above sea level, that Frank S. Smythe, the English explorer and mountaineer, made his bewildering discovery. Accompanied by three Tibetan porters from Darjeeling, several years ago, he was headed for an unexplored glacier-filled valley and the bleak peak of Nilgiri Parbat beyond.

Suddenly he stopped in astonishment. In the snow at his feet were naked tracks, perfect impressions and distinct in every detail, apparently made by a giant biped that resembled a human being. The porters, instantly terrified, excitedly explained: "Mirka! Bad Manshi!"

Smythe had heard of the strange legend of the "Abominable Snowmen," also known as Mi-go and Mirka, which persists for hundreds of miles along the Himalayan chain through Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan. He knew that they were said to be monstrous bipeds, half man and half beast, devouring yaks which they disabled by hamstringing. Lurid pictures of them were displayed in many Tibetan monasteries.

And substance had been added to the legend, Smythe also knew, in the previous reports of European mountaineers of mysterious footprints observed in the snow far above the permanent snowline. H. W. Tilman, leader of the 1938 Mt. Everest Expedition, had reported seeing prints on a snowfield in the Karakorams, and other similar tracks had been noticed by members of expeditions to Kinchinjunga and other peaks in the area. An English lady from Dalimpong had told of being startled by a terrific roar that shook the ground, unlike any sound she had ever heard before, while she was crossing a high pass into Tibet. Later, in July, 1939, a Polish expedition investigating these strange tracks had reached a height of 20,500 feet on Nanda Devi when an avalanche crashed and killed two of the party.

A FACT STORY

Smythe decided to make careful measurements and photographs of the prints for a scientific report. He found that they averaged thirteen inches in length and six inches in breadth with the stride from one and a half to two feet on the level. There were imprints of five toes, but unlike human toes they were arranged symmetrically. In one direction the tracks led down to the snowline toward the valley displaying great intelligence in overcoming the difficulties of a crevassed, icy glacier.

UPON returning to India, Smythe sent his report and pictures to a committee of scientists headed by Professor Julian Huxley, secretary of the English Zoological Society. They decided that the tracks were made by a bear, *Ursus Arctos Pruinosus,* which varies in color from brown to silver gray, and is abundant in the Himalayas. This species often attains a large size and is said to be very ferocious. That the tracks appeared to have been made by a biped was explained by the creature putting its rear foot into the rear end of the impression left by its front foot.

Most outstanding of Smythe's critics was H. W. Tilman, of Mt. Everest fame. He admitted that the tracks photographed by Smythe were likely those of a bear, but pointed out that only the three frightened porters had ever said that they were those of a snowman. Tilman then stated that the prints he had previously observed in the upper basin of the Biafo Glacier might or might not have been made by a snowman, but they were certainly not those of a bear.

He described them as follows: "They were roughly circular, about eight inches in diameter, eighteen inches apart and some nine inches in depth, evidently belonging to a beast of some weight. But the curious point was that the spoor was exactly like that a bird makes. That is to say, all the footmarks lay on the same straight line with no stagger right or left of it, nor was there any indication whatsoever of overlapping as would be the case if the beast was four-footed."

Tilman followed the prints for over a mile until they disappeared up some rocks, then the next day the spoor was picked up some three miles away on the opposite side of the glacier. His native porters, without hesitation, said that the tracks had been made by a snowman of the smaller variety, and not his larger yak-eating brother. Tilman adds that his observation was made at a height of 18,000 feet, with no grass or game within fifteen miles, and the nearest village about forty miles distant.

A few days later, at a lower level, Tilman writes that bear tracks were numerous, and "were quickly recognized as such by the porters and myself." Most of the natives of the region have a good knowledge of the tracks made by the animals living there, and it does not seem likely that they would be puzzled by the prints of a bear that is so common in that locality. Smythe's porters, although Tibetan, were from India.

As the debate continued, various observations of interest were made. A disagreement as to the exact species of bear represented by Smythe's prints existed between Professor Huxley and R. I. Pocock, of the Natural History Section of the British Museum. One writer suggested that Tilman's tracks might have been made by a large otter. Finally, it was proposed by several of the explorers and scientists involved that a special expedition be sent to Tibet to solve the problem. This expedition has not been formed, but it is certain that all future explorations in the Himalayas will be prepared to photograph footprints in the perpetual snows.

H. B. Hudson, a renowned Himalayan explorer, states that in 1933 while he was camping in a glade of pine trees in the Kamalban Forest one evening, he heard "all of a sudden a ghastly yell from among the trees not far away. My servants were obviously terrified, and I asked what had made that hideous noise." He was told that it was a snowman—a spirit of the lonely, restless dead.

In 1934 the Reverend Harold Young, a missionary, arrived in Los Angeles and told reporters that he had encountered gigantic silver-haired ape-like creatures in the Yunnan jungles of China. Then, from India, came additional reports that indicated that the giant snowmen sometimes wander away from their usual mountain abode into surrounding areas.

Three times huge human-like footprints have been found in a limited district in

Northern India. Back in 1936 Robert Ripley, in reporting the first two occurrences, called it "The Great Mystery of India."

But two years later they appeared again, and the mystery deepened.

ON June 20, 1938, a Reuter's dispatch from Simla, India, announced that a large number of apparently human footprints, two feet in length and eleven inches wide, had been found in a field in the district of Jalpaiguri. It was estimated that the owner of feet capable of making such impressions must have been at least eighteen feet tall. Apparently the giant passed the nearby village in the night, for the prints, which were about 35 cubits apart, were discovered by the natives early in the morning. The direction taken by the weird visitor was from the northeast to the southwest.

The first report of these prints was made in 1928 when the impressions passed from north to south near Jalpaiguri, which lies south of the Tibetan border and Darjeeling. The second occurrence was in June, 1936, when the prints were found passing from the northwest toward the southeast in a field near Belakoba in the province of Bengal. They were 22 inches in length.

During the late war a group of fliers forced down on the famous "Hump" route to Kunming had to trek over several hundred miles of rough territory back to India. They claimed that they had caught glimpses of huge men silently following them through the mountains, but never coming close. Giant prints in the snow were observed by Wing Commander E. B. Beauman and Eric Shipton, the Everest climber, in the Garhwal and Kumaon districts which were similar to those reported by Tilman. They varied in size from ordinary human prints to others in which their own prints only filled a quarter.

Jean Marques-Riviere, the French explorer, tells of talking with pilgrims from the Himalayas who have had friends killed by the snowmen. One, an annual traveler, told him that he saw them once on the northern Nepal frontier, and that they were "neither apes nor bears, but giants." Soon after coming across their huge footprints in single file, the pilgrim continued, he and his party discovered a circle of about ten of these creatures, ten or twelve feet high, beating drums and engaged in some rite. Their bodies were naked and covered with hair, their features ape-like, and "a sadness was expressed on their frightful visages."

That similar creatures may exist in North America is indicated by several scattered reports in recent years. Early last January Dr. Forsyth, who has been in charge of the Grenfell Medical Mission in Labrador since 1932, told of giant-sized barefoot tracks of ape-like beings being repeatedly found in the snow. These prints sometimes led to "nests" under trees, and one set was traced for fifteen miles over rough country. The biped that made them "climbed easily over stumps and other obstructions where an ordinary man would have gone around."

Many evidences of giant beings have been found in the wilds of British Columbia, Canada, and the Indians as far south as Puget Sound, Washington, have legends of these creatures. According to accounts appearing in the Victoria (B. C.) *Daily Times,* numerous trappers and Indians have observed these giants, which are described as hairy, with ape-like features, and about eight feet tall. J. W. Burns, Indian agent at the Chehalis Indian Reservation, reports that those beings are descendants of an ancient tribe, are very shy, and have been noticed in the vicinity of Morris Mountain.

Recent discoveries made in China and Java by Dr. G. H. R. von Koenigswald, the Dutch paleontologist, of prehistoric enormous men, more primitive than the famous "Java Man," point to the possibility that such creatures may have survived to the present day in the inaccessible fastnesses of Asia and North America. The China giant, named Gigantopithecus, which lived in eastern Asia about half a million years ago, had teeth twice as large as a gorilla's tooth of today.

It is Dr. von Koenigswald's opinion that in evolution man became smaller, rather than growing from small to large as most modern animals have evolved. If so, we now have a basis for the world-wide legends of ancient giants and the interesting speculation that their elusive descendants may be existing today.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

CARVING a career out of the jungle.

Query:—A group of us were talking the other night and the following question came up: Where can an ambitious young man go these days to find a little excitement and adventure, as well as a chance to build a future for himself off the beaten path of a routine job? Not necessarily in the States. Those of us who were discussing this problem had all had an opportunity to see something of the world while in the service (which perhaps has made us a bit restless at the prospect of settling down to a more or less humdrum existence). But, to get down to cases, I am writing you because for some time I have been interested in South America (which I have never visited) and particularly Brazil, the Mato Grosso and the Amazon River country. Are there any frontiers left down there for a young man who is short on capital but long on willingness to try something new—and not afraid of a little hard work? I'd appreciate very much hearing from you.

—Harry C. Graham
7 Fern Road
Larchmont, New York

Reply by Arthur J. Burks:—Yes, there are still frontiers around the world where restless, adventurous young men of vision can carve out fortunes for themselves, perhaps even find that which they dream most of possessing. I have just spent four months on one such frontier. It is not in the United States, or even on the North American continent, but connections are so close that it doesn't matter as much as one might at first imagine. It is in Brazil, specifically on the emerald Tapajos River, which flows north from Mato Grosso into the Amazon at Santarem.

The water distance from Santarem to Barra is approximately eleven hundred kilometers, and the land on either bank, especially south of Sao Luiz, is practically unexplored, and uninhabited except by wild Indians. Close to the river, with their cabins all but on the banks, are *caboclos*, a word referring to river people with somewhat the same meaning as our words "hill-billy" or "hicks."

I have slept in the palmfrond cabins of many *caboclos*. I know them and their families well. I like and respect them. Few of them can read or write, but all are religious, hospitable, reasonably hardworking. They would be the partners of Americans who went into their land to make their fortunes, for such Americans would have to hold property, if they elected to possess property at all, in the names of their Brazilian partners. Other Americans have committed themselves to such partnerships, and I have yet to hear one of them complain.

One such American is one of today's top-flight pioneers in every sense of the word. He is Robin Hollie McGlohn, age forty, ex-lieutenant commander, U.S. Navy, ex-assistant chief pilot, Pan American Airways. Several years ago McGlohn went into partnership with another American who was also in partnership with Brazilians, in a plant which processed *timbo*. *Timbo* is a plant which produces the drug *rotenone*, and has been known to the Indians since time immemorial. They mingle the latex with backwaters of their rivers, and fish turn belly up and can be taken by hand, as a result. One John "Jimmy" James had started to produce *timbo* for the American market, with *rotenone* as a base for

an insecticide. He needed capital, which McGlohn produced. Then James died. That left the *timbo* plant on McGlohn's hands, at about which time he heard that practically a whole river was for sale!

A Brazilian company called the Alto Tapajos, by virtue of owning all the transportation, all the boats, between Sao Luiz and Mato Grosso, controlled the Upper Tapajos. They owned the island of Gurapa, 25,000 acres, on the Amazon, and tracts of land between Sao Luiz and Santarem, on the Tapajos. They actually owned about 400,000 acres, but ownership of the launches and smallboats, and the *Rio Tapajos*, a river steamer which plied monthly between Belem and Sao Luiz, made them actually the arbiters of the lives and property of all other peoples on the Upper Tapajos. The company was for sale, price about $300,000. McGlohn came to the States, arranged for the money, bought the Alto Tapajos. Andrew Jackson Higgins, of Higgins boat fame, supplied most of the money and something even more valuable, fatherly business advice.

McGlohn found himself, as president of Alto Tapajos, running the emerald river. Henry Ford had owned large tracts on the lower river, at Fordlanddia and Belterra, but he had got out of Brazil, selling his holdings to the Brazilian Government, which left McGlohn and some more Americans who threw in with him, also at once, logical successors to the Ford interests.

McGlohn took over Alto Tapajos in 1944, while the war was still going strong, and every nerve of all Americans and Brazilians was strained to produce all the rubber possible. For generations, even when rubber prices were lowest, rubber and *caucho*, the latter a second grade rubber, were the principal crop of the *caboclo* on the Tapajos. It still is at this writing, but a fear that has always been present, and has been proved several times in the past, that the bottom would fall out of the price of rubber, has inspired McGlohn and his subordinates to hunt out other crops for the *caboclos*. There are millions of acres of *mato*, or jungle, on either side of the Tapajos. Scattered through it are several kinds of the hardest woods in the world, wood so hard it sinks like concrete even in salt water. The shattered railroads of the world need that hard wood for ties. *Caboclos* know nothing of railroads, but the overseer, owner of property or merely a contractor, who could get out railroad ties, could make a fortune. He could teach *caboclos* how to do it, and keep them busy, and raise the living standards of the *caboclos* at the same time.

There are Brazil nuts to be had for the taking. There are taxes, of course, at the points of embarkation, but they are small compared to the value of the crop. Brazil nuts bring big prices around the world—and cost comparatively little to gather.

Cashews are plentiful along the river, and the nuts fall and rot on the ground, or are eaten by swine, because they are not gathered. Look in the windows along Broadway, and see how much candy and nut shops are asking for, and getting, for cashews. The man who develops the cashew market has better than a pittance against the proverbial rainy day.

Then there are other nuts, bearing essential oils for commerce, the names of which are unknown to Americans for the most part: *tucuma*, from a sturdy palm with two-inch spines on its trunk, *eurua*, *amaja*, *jaoery*, hard nuts which often go to waste for lack of machinery to crack and shell them. The prices on the Tapajos are low, recent quotations in the States and Europe high enough to justify plenty of thought on the part of the young American anxious to start something new on his own.

The *mato* teems with jaguars, deer, tapir, wild pig, all with hides which have definite value in commerce, can be sold on delivery in Belem. Alligator skins are worth money anywhere on the river. Otter skins are well worth taking at any time. Snakeskins are also valuable. The hunter-trapper can make himself a small fortune in this hunter-trapper's paradise. The river is also alive with fish of countless kinds, many of which have not even been named by the *caboclos*, most of which are tasty. The man who figures out how to bring sportsmen to the Tapajos for the hunting and fishing will have a little bonanza for himself—or his group.

McGlohn has just made an arrangement with Anaconda Copper whereby *all* Brazil will be studied for precious metals. The young man who has a yen for geology and is not afraid of the jungles can do at least as much for himself as young men have always done on elusive hunts for gold and precious stones. Brazil has always been rich in metal and ore. The right young men could tie in either with McGlohn or Anaconda Copper, I imagine. If not, there is nothing to prevent them from going in on their own, paying their way, and seeing what they can do for themselves. Expensive? Well, let's see. I just spent four and a half months on the river. The cost was $285, and I spent all that at Belem, before I left and after I returned from the Tapajos! Get out of the big city as soon as possible after arrival, and the cost can be as little as you try to make it.

You need a passport, of course. The visa will run for six months, but can be renewed in Belem. A six months' trial will show you what you can do, and may even provide you with all the adventure you yearn for. And it may also set you up in business.

You'll have to take certain precautions. You'll have to be "shot" for yellow fever, typhoid, and be vaccinated. You have to show your yellow fever certificate—theoretically, nobody ever asked to see mine!—before you can travel up the Amazon. Have it anyway. It's better not to have yellow fever if you can avoid it. The same goes for malaria, which calls for daily oral doses of atabrine. Personally, I never even used a mosquito net, anywhere on the Tapajos or the Cururu, eastward of the northernmost point of Mato Grosso.

McGlohn has one man, Paul Jones Sammons,

also an ex-Pan American flyer, who does nothing but "prospect" around old Indian villages, all along the Tapajos and its tributaries, for *timbo*, which he transplants to new plantations on Alto Tapajos land. In three years those plantations will be fabulously valuable. McGlohn and Sammons would welcome others who could develop *timbo* and thus help to keep their *timbo* processing plant in Belem going.

Philip M. "Fritz" Blotner, until recently a Pan American Airways Operations Manager, is McGlohn's field manager at Sao Luiz on the Tapajos—McGlohn has to spend most of his time at the head office in Belem—and his plans for the future are dreams requiring many hands and brains to make them come true. He wants to run roads straight away from the river into the jungle, at intervals all along the river—to a depth of perhaps twenty-five kilometers, and help *caboclos* to build houses on either side of the roads, on property the company will help the *caboclos* to purchase or lease. Whoever operates the company store at the river end of any one of those roads will handle everything the *caboclos* produce in rubber, hides, *farinha*, coffee, tobacco, cotton, farm produce and the like, and will sell them their merchandise at a good profit. Company boats will bring in merchandise to the docks and take away the produce. Here are literally hundreds of jobs, businesses, professions, in prospect. All can be started with little or no money, the primary need being for the ambitious ones to get themselves there somehow, with a *little* money, and not be afraid of work.

Naturally you can't tell, nor can I, what the tropics will do to you. Brazilians, and many Americans, say that the average American has no business in the jungles. But it doesn't hurt McGlohn, Blotner or Sammons, and there are Americans who have spent most of their lives in the *mato*. No man knows whether he is fit for the jungle, how he will make out against potential diseases, until he tries. I didn't even get a touch of fever, never spent a healthier four months in my life: but then I've spent two long hitches in the tropics and know more or less how to pace myself.

Caboclos build hardwood *canoas*. The man who can build better ones along the river—and he could hire every tap of work done by *caboclos* who now know how—could sell every one to the company itself; they never have enough.

The east bank of the Tapajos, from the As Tropas river to the Jamachim, and an undetermined distance further north, is the stamping grounds of the Caiapos, wild Indians who kill with the war club from behind. They've brained a dozen or more of McGlohn's rubber workers. They sit right atop the best rubber areas. What makes outwitting them an interesting pastime, while trying to make a living in the jungles besides, is the fact that it's against Brazilian law to shoot an Indian, even in self-defense!

Further south, between the As Tropas and the Cururu, the Mundurucu Indians are good Catholics, good rubber cutters and farmers.

Other dangers are snakes, about one tenth of one percent as numerous as "explorers" and "adventurers" would have you believe; alligators which let you alone if you keep your distance; *piranhas*, three kinds, the man-eating fish, in whose river I used to go bathing every morning. He'll let you alone as long as you're not bleeding. If you're bleeding, stay out of the water or be ready to lose everything but your bones!

I don't recommend that *any* American go to any other country for good. But what's to prevent any American from developing a nest egg in foreign territory, when he is not only doing that country a favor it will never get around to doing for itself, by helping in its development, but is preparing a good vacation ground for himself when he needs a rest from hectic life in the States. I expect to spend half of each year in Brazil, half of it in the States. *My* principal interest is stories, articles, movies, still pictures, and keeping track of Americans who make stories. How do Americans now in Brazil feel about divided loyalties, between the two countries?

"I wouldn't give six feet of the United States for all of Brazil," said McGlohn, "if it meant losing United States citizenship. I expect Brazilians to feel the same about their country!" That about says it.

THERE'S no crimping for the Merchan Marine these days!

Query:—What are the duties and activities of the Merchant Marine and how do I go about joining it or obtaining training which would permit me to join?

—Richard Cain
1533 W. 77th St.,
Chicago, 20, Ill.

Reply By Kermit W. Salyer—Duties aboard ship are divided into three departments: deck, engine and stewards.

The deck department is concerned with the cargo stowage, navigation and handling of the ship, and general maintenance which consists of a lot of dirty jobs such as washing paintwork, painting, chipping and scaling. This department is made up of sailors and mates.

The engine department takes care of the engine room. In this department are the wipers, firemen, oilers, watertenders and engineers. They see that the fires under the boilers are kept burning properly, they oil the moving parts of the engines, and they keep the engine room clean. The engineers execute orders from the bridge in regard to maneuvering and handling the ship.

The steward's department is made up of the cooks, waiters, messboys, messmen, stewards, etc., who cook, make up beds, and do the general catering and cleaning of the rooms and quarters.

The only way you can join the Merchant Marine today is through Cadet Corps, which means that you'd have to take a competitive examination similar to the one for Annapolis.

Because of the great numbers of men trained for the wartime merchant fleet, there

(Continued on page 143)

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. **Air Mail** is quicker for foreign service!

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SPORTS AND HOBBIES

American Folklore and Legend: *Songs, dances, regional customs; African survivals, religious sects; voodoo*—HAROLD PREECE, c/o *Adventure.*

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, c/o *Adventure.*

Auto Racing—WILLIAM CAMPBELL GAULT, c/o *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, c/o *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Boxing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure.*

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Dogs—FREEMAN LLOYD, c/o *Adventure.*

Fencing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure.*

Fishing, Fresh water: *Fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: *Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, c/o *Adventure.*

Fly and Bait Casting Tournaments—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, c/o *Adventure.*

Horses and Horsemanship—JOHN RICHARD YOUNG, c/o *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *American and Foreign*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *American and Foreign, wing shooting and field trials*—ROY S. TINNEY, Chatham, New Jersey.

Skiing—WILLIAM C. CLAPP, The Mountain Book Shop, North Conway, N. H.

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 116 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL R. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, c/o *Adventure.*

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America. Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure.*

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *Telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL. c/o *Adventure.*

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling:—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Sunken Treasure: *Treasure ships; deep-sea diving; salvage operations and equipment*—LIEUTENANT HARRY E. RIESENBERG. c/o *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 14 N. Burnett St., East Orange, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

United States Army—COL. R. G. EMERY, U.S.A., Ret., c/o *Adventure.*

United States Marine Corps—MAJ. ROBERT H. RANKIN, U.S.M.C.R., c/o *Adventure.*

United States Navy—LIEUT. DURAND KIEFER, U.S.N., Ret., Box 74, Del Mar, Calif.

Merchant Marine—KERMIT W. SALYER, c/o *Adventure.*

Military Aviation—O. B. MYERS, c/o *Adventure.*

Federal Investigation Activities—*Secret Service, Immigration, Customs, Border Patrol, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure.*

The French Foreign Legion—GEORGES SURDEZ, c/o *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, c/o *Adventure.*

★New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 83 Sidney Rd., Manley, N. S. W., Australia.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya*—GORDON MACCREAGH, care of *Adventure.* **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **4** *Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure.* **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durban Natal, So. Africa.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDEL, care of *Adventure.* **4** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **5** ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

Europe, Part 1 ★*The British Isles*—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., London, W.C 2, England. **2** *Denmark, Germany, Scandinavia*—G. I. COLBRON, c/o *Adventure.*

Central America—ROBERT SPIERS BENJAMIN, c/o *Adventure.*

South America Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile*—EDGAR YOUNG, care of *Adventure.* **2** ★*Argentina*—ALLISON WILLIAMS BUNKLEY, care of *Adventure.* **3** ★*Brazil* —ARTHUR J. BURKS, c/o Alto Tapajos, Rua Gaspar Viana, 18, Belem, Para, Brazil.

West Indies—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, c/o *Adventure.*

Iceland—G. I. COLBRON, c/o *Adventure.*

Baffinland and Greenland—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure.*

Labrador—WILMOT T. DEBELL, c/o *Adventure,*

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2093 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche*—CAPTAIN W. RUSSELL SHEETS, care of *Adventure.* **3** ★ *West Coast beginning with State of Sinaloa; Central and Southern Mexico including Tabasco and Chiapas*—WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Club Americano, Bolivar 31, México, D.F.

Canada, Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN 89 Laurentide Ave., Quebec, Canada. **2** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario*—HARRY M. MOORE. 579 Isabella, Pembroke, Ont., Canada. **3** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario; National Parks Camping* — A. D. L. ROBINSON, 103 Wembly Rd., Toronto, Ont., Can. **4** ★*Northern Saskatchewan; Indian life and language, hunting, trapping* —H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St. E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada. **5** ★*Yukon, British Columbia, Alberta*—PHILIP H. GODSELL, F.R.G.S., General Delivery, Airdrie, Alberta, Canada.

Alaska—FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE, 5747 Ambleside Rd, Seattle, Wash.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, care of *Adventure.* **2** *New Mexico; Indians, etc.*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1236 N. 8th St., Albuquerque, New Mexico. **3** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rookies*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. **4** *Idaho and environs* –R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris Ill. **5** *Arizona, Utah*—C. C. ANDERSON, care of *Arizona Stockman*, Arizona Title Bldg., Phoenix, Ariz. **6** *Texas, Oklahoma*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2093 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S., Part 1 *Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi River*—GEO. A. ZERR, 31 Cannon St., Pittsburgh, 5, Penna. **2** *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood Calif.

Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 716 Woodmont, Conn **3** *Adirondacks, New York*— RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif. **4** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla, Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.* **5** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

There are Boches hiding in the woods and they killed my friend Albert! Fearful tidings and all too common in wartime when the Nazi hordes overran all Europe and patrols in *feldgrau* lurked at every crossroad and infested every village. But this was 1947—the war was over—and peace was supposed to have come to the mountains of the Jura even as it had to every other part of France. To Bruce Kerrigan, rusticating in the Swiss-border countryside near Forlagne after far too many years of killing Boches, the words would have added up to nothing more than nonsense—save for two things. He'd recognized the all too familiar death rattle of a German *mitraillette*—an automatic carbine—spraying the night air. And then, too, the bleeding boy in the attic bedroom of the farm-house had never received those bullet wounds in his leg save from a military weapon. It all pointed to the impossible—but there it was. And the strange labyrinth of contradictory, criss-crossing trails could lead to only one place—the barb-wire-barricaded sanatorium at the top of the mountain known locally as "The End of the World." . . . One of your favorite authors, a master adventure-tale spinner, taps a new and colorful background next month in the first installment of a gripping four-part story of post-war France. You mustn't miss—

"RESTRICTED!"
By Georges Surdez

"RED IVORY"
By Alexander Wallace

—takes you to the Kosango country of Portuguese East Africa to the compounds of the Companhia do Nyassa where great piles of prime coffee-brown tusks, worth a fortune to any jungle filibuster with guts to raid a caravan, lie waiting for transport to a coast they'll never reach till they've become crimsoned with the blood of a thousand savage sweating porters—and of the white men who play a ton of ivory against a human life as carelessly as they'd check a pawn on a chessboard. . . . And John Scott Douglas in "Seafaring Lancer" puts a harpoon in your hand, plants you in the pulpit of the swordfisher *Dauntless*, and puts you over five hundred pounds of leaping fury in a gripping novelette of the commercial fishermen of the California coast. . . Plus exciting short stories of the fog-bound Aleutians. . . Of homesteading in the Texas backwoods. . . Of our State Department under-cover men in the Near East, by B. L. McGann, Fred Gipson and Robinson MacLean. . . . A great new Caradosso story by F. R. Buckley. . . . The smashing conclusion of Carl D. Lane's "Prairie Paddles." . . . And a fine assortment of fact features, articles, informative departments and verse. All in the great DECEMBER issue of—

Adventure 25c

ON SALE NOVEMBER 7th

(Continued from page 8)

ALLEN RANKIN, whose "A Buck to Grow Up On" on page 78 marks his first appearance in *Adventure*, sends along the following by way of introduction on joining our Writers' Brigade—

Last December I was coming up the Tombigbee River with a friend. We had spent the night at his hunting lodge and were on the way up river to shoot some mallard. It was just at daylight. The steep banks on either side were getting blue, the blue that frost makes in first light. The mist, still lying low on the water, padded all sounds and left us in a world of our own.

Suddenly, up ahead, we saw two spots of black. They turned out to be two big bucks, swimming the river apparently to escape a big drive on the left bank. We could hear dogs hollering from where they had come. They were two of the biggest bucks I have ever seen; each had about 16 points. They were swimming so desperately half their bodies stood out of the water. Their eyes were bulging, and as we came alongside them in our motor boat, they blew and trumpeted in panic. We slipped along beside them for awhile, reaching out from time to time to grab their antlers. When they veered to the bank we left them.

Later we saw a man try to run down the deer while pinging at them with a .22 rifle. Fortunately, he couldn't get his shots and his outboard-motor-handling coordinated. The deer made the bank and got away.

From this episode to my story was a very short jump, as you can see. As for my own background—I am a feature writer on the Birmingham *News*. I have been writing almost constantly for nine years—ever since graduating from the University of Alabama and getting my first reporting job on the Montgomery (Ala.) *Advertiser*.

My five-year Army trek turned out to be a break rather than an interruption. Entering the Air Forces as a second lieutenant, I flew around the country writing magazine and other publicity for about four years. The last one I spent at Saipan as Public Relations Officer of the Seventh Air Force, and finally as a magazine writer for the B-29 outfit stationed at Guam. I left as a Lt. Colonel.

I freelanced for 18 months after coming out of the Army. During this period I sold articles or fiction to the *Saturday Evening Post, Colliers, Liberty, Coronet, This Week* and other magazines. Now I've begun to consider myself a "'professional" since I'm convinced you have to be one to write *Adventure's* type of action story. Here's to hitting you again!

ARTIST Nick Eggenhofer, who illustrated Nat McKelvey's "Cowpunching in Paradise" on page 74 this month, has as fine a collection of cattle "scrap" in his morgue for reference purposes as any illustrator of cowboy material we know. But his files were minus any photographs or descriptive matter covering T. H.

No, he didn't cook up his illustration for the McKelvey article out of a vivid imagination and some old Remington prints he found kicking around the studio! What he did was refuse to do the job till *we* dug up something authentic to which he could refer. So we promptly wrote to Mr. E. Curtis Cluff, who lives at Makawao on the island of Maui and asked him to come to the rescue. He sent us a fine batch of prints made by his wife showing loading on the Parker ranch and at Kahua, a neighboring ranch. These we passed along to Nick and there's what he did with 'em. When he enclosed the snaps Mr. Cluff wrote—

This loading business seems to be the most dramatic difference between Hawaiian and mainland cattle work. As you possibly know, the steer is roped in the corral and, fighting all the way, is dragged out into the water over its head and made fast to the small boat. When about half a dozen head have been secured to the boat they are rowed out to the steamer and loaded on via bellyband and boom. This loading method has been necessary because of lack of harbor facilities. I understand that a new pier out into deep water will be completed in the near future (if it has not already been completed) and the old method will be abandoned.

And so will pass another colorful phase of cowboy-and-cattle history. We're glad we got it in print and picture before it vanished completely!

THREE additions to the roll of *Ask Adventure* experts this month.

Frank Richardson Pierce will answer queries on Alaska, succeeding Theodore S. Solomons, whose untimely death occurred recently. Mr. Pierce really needs no introduction to *Adventure* readers for he started writing authentic fiction and authoritative articles about Alaska way back in May, 1921, and has kept at it ever since, contributing many thousands of words to these pages down through the years.

"Flight from Nome" in the August issue was his most recent appearance on our contents page.

Accepting our invitation to join the staff Mr. Pierce writes—

I'm pretty well occupied with a book these days—the '98 stampede. I've been making notes on it for twenty-five years and was lucky enough to know many of the important characters before they hit the last trail. So I'm well posted on that period. . . .

AND here's Philip H. Godsell, F.R.G.S., who succeeds the recently deceased C. Plowden to take over the answering of queries about British Columbia, Yukon Territory and Alberta. Until a few months ago, when its Rockefeller grant expired, Mr. Godsell was editor of the *Alberta Folklore Quarterly,* published by the University of Alberta under the sponsorship of the Rockefeller Foundation. To introduce him we quote from a recent issue of that publication—

"Mr. Godsell sailed from London through Hudson Straits on the oaken-prowed *Pelican* in 1906, a raw recruit to the ranks of the Hudson's Bay Company. He landed at the palisaded fort of York Factory, established by the ubiquitous Radisson in the days of the Merry Monarch. To the swish of the Northern Lights, the crackle of campfires and the crunch of snowshoes, his trails have carried him by dogsled, canoe and Indian-manned York boat 100,000 miles through the heart of our vast Northland. His moccasined feet have followed dim trails from Labrador to the heart of Alaska, and from the bark wigwams of Hiawatha's dusky Ojibways to the blubber-lit igloos of the so-called "Blonde" Eskimos of the Central Arctic.

"Godsell, in the old days, smuggled beaver under the noses of Provincial Police, who made frequent raids upon his posts; helped Factor Beatton of Fort St. John to save a survey party from massacre at the hands of The Wolf and his Beaver Indian braves, and reared Fort Brabant among the Cogmollock Eskimos, where Corporal Doak of the Mounted Police and Otto Binder of the Hudson's Bay Company had fallen before their bullets and copper snowknives only the year before. From the rock-walled Coppermine he sent a two-man expedition to the Magnetic Pole in 1923, which discovered 400 hitherto unknown Eskimos and reared a trading post on King William's Land, graveyard of the Franklin Expedition, in the heart of the Northwest Passage. Today the pioneer road he blazed from Fort St. John to Fort Nelson through the hunting-grounds of Chief Bellyfull's hostile Sickannies has been converted by Uncle Sam's doughboys into the first link of the Alaskan Defense Highway, over which American tanks, troops, and ammunition whirled north to carry the war to Hirohito.

"During the Royal visit to Winnipeg Mr. Godsell, an adopted Chief of the Cree tribe, brought in befeathered headmen of the Cree, Sioux and Ojibway tribes to meet Their Majesties. Copies of two of his earlier works, *Arrctic Trader* and *Red Hunters of the Snows,* were later accepted by His Majesty, King George VI, as outstanding works on our nearing Northland. Mr. Godsell's latest work, *The Romance of the Alaska Highway,* was published last December. His other books are *The Vanishing Frontier* and *They Got Their Man.* All have enjoyed a wide sale and have been translated into numerous foreign languages."

LAST of our trio of new experts is Harold Preece who is literally a mine of information concerning little-known facets of Americana. "American Folklore and Legend: *Songs, dances, regional customs; African survivals, religious sects, voodoo,*" is the way we have designated his field—or fields—but that doesn't tell half the story. We know Mr. Preece and his infinite capacity for digging out obscurantia concerning his varied interests. He's been a court of last appeal on more than one occasion when we've been stuck for a fact or reference or lead and we're sure you'll find him equally valuable.

He introduces himself briefly thuswise—

From Bull Creek in Texas to Boston in Massachusetts is a long jump via a series of intermediate hops over the years. And even though we now live in Boston, my long-suffering wife is resigned, with the fatalism of wives, to the fact that she will never get Bull Creek out of me.

Well, Texans always brag about Texas in general but I like to brag about Bull Creek that last outpost of the Southern hill people—in particular. I was born there on January 16, 1906, in the same neck of the woods where my granddad had organized pro-Union guerrillas to bushwhack his pro-Confederate neighbors. And even today, you'd have to shoot it out with my old cowpuncher dad if you called him a Secesh or a sheepherder. Howsomever, the Secesh families on Bull Creek have since gotten to be our own kinfolks through the sparkings and other carryings-on between boys and gals at box suppers and brush-arbor revivals.

I picked a lot of cotton when I was a kid, went to New Mexico in a covered wagon with my folks to homestead in 1915, got burnt out by the drouth and came back to Texas. Started writing as a teen-ager for the amateur publications of the old Lone Scout organization. Worked successively since that time as a free lance for many magazines. Also at various times a newspaperman, magazine editor, publicist, advertising copy writer and what have you? If I ever get to Heaven, which I doubt,

(Continued on page 142)

LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

I am trying to locate my buddy, Norman Proper. He was on the *S. S. Minotaur, S. S. Matonian,* and the *S. S. Esso Baytown.* His hometown is Denver, Colo., and he is 6' 2" tall, weighing about 165 lbs. He has brown hair. He was last heard of in Port Aransas, Texas. William Quinn, 3314 Waterloo Place, Dallas, Texas.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Arthur Micue or Matthews, please write N. F. Preo, 3000 S. Lawndale Ave., Chicago 23, Ill. He enlisted from Maine in the U. S. Army, served in Texas and Mexico with the cavalry against Villa about 1917-1918.

I would appreciate any help in finding George Van Denworker. He would be about 80 years old now. He raised my wife's father, George A. Van Denworker, along with three other boys, one of whom was his own. The family last heard from him in 1935 when he was in San Francisco. Please contact Laurence C. Buck, 317½ N. Maine St., Ellensburg, Washington.

Information wanted about Lt. Gene Manghi, O-1641540, 56th Signal Battalion, who wrote me from Czechoslovakia regarding my article on hybrid oak crop trees published in *Popular Science,* April, 1945. Any knowledge of him should be forwarded to Thomas Q. Mitchell, 1564 Broadway, New York, N. Y., c/o BILLBOARD.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of my son, Hercules McClain, veteran of World War I, last heard of at 519½ South Daley St., Los Angeles, Calif., engaged in landscape gardening at that time, 1932, please write to his brother, William D. Meeks, Apt. 1, 102 Palmetto Dr., Pasadena, 4, Calif.,

I want to contact Stephen Kolowski from Chicago who was on the Secretary of Navy's yacht and at the Receiving Station in Washington. Also Joe Viediteh who was on the old Reuben James 245 in 1920—and William Jennings Bryan Guest from St. Louis who was on the old battleship, the New Jersey. Would also like to find William Wischertch from the Naval Magazine in Coco Solo and Naval Air Station along with William Henry Hanna Hurst from New Orleans who was on the old Flusser 289 in 1920. Please write L. W. Fraser, CGM, USN, 16th Fleet Staff, Orange, Texas.

I would appreciate any information about Frank and Fred Reed of New Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The last known of Frank, he was still in Pennsylvania and Fred was somewhere on the West Coast. Anyone knowing of either Frank's or Fred's whereabouts, please write to M. M. Mausser, R.F.D. No. 1, Bernard, Iowa.

Can anyone help me find my brother-in-law, Anthony Ofsian? I last heard from him in 1943 when he sailed with the Merchant Marine. He usually sailed the Robin Lines as a cook or chief steward. His mother is very sick and is asking for him. Anyone having any information regarding Tony, please communicate with Joseph J. Machovic, 833 Abbott Court, Baltimore 2, Md.

I am anxious to contact Lt. Cal Newton, formerly of the 491st Post Battalion, Transportation Corps, formed at Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Penna. Newton attended the Army Administrative Officer Candidate School No. 6 at State College, Mississippi, and is urged to contact Edwin F. Ficklen, Statler Hotel, 423 E. 7th St., Los Angeles, 13, Calif.

I am very interested in locating the following buddies of mine. We served in the 26th Regt., First Inf. Div., both in the states and the ETO; in England, Scotland, North Africa, and Sicily, where we were separated. S/Sgt. John Page, about 5' 7", 140 lbs., ruddy complexion, reddish brown wavy hair, square features, and about 33 years of age. Page is formerly of Jersey City, N. J. Sgt. George (Big George) Brighindi, 6' 1", 200 lbs., olive complexion, black wavy hair, plays guitar. He is from Bridgeport, Conn., about 29. T/Sgt. Arthur (Lippy) Lippman, dark complexion, black thinning wavy hair, about 5' 6", slender build, from New York City, is about 32 years old. Any information will be appreciated by Danny Monahan, 354 Water St., Leominster, Mass.

I should like to locate Vernie Baldwin, 35 years old, lived in Live Oak and Jacksonville, Florida, in 1928 and early in the 30's. He is related to John Sterling and is the son of B. O. Baldwin. Please write J. E. Cross, P. O. Box 61, Live Oak, Fla.

I am very anxious to contact my old buddy, former S/Sgt. Harry Rogers. We served with the 491st Bomb. Group H. He may be in Biloxi, Miss., or Mobile, Ala. I have been trying since October, 1945, to find him and any help you may be able to give me will be appreciated. Please write to George Paraspolo, 627 29th St., San Francisco, Calif.

Will any solder serving in Company A, 275th Engineers Bn., 75th Division, in Holland during the first part of 1944 who knew Cpl. F/5 Thomas L. Graham or Quentin Rall please write to Mrs. J. E. Graham, Artesia, New Mexico.

I would like to locate Ed La Vergue who was on the *USS Marblehead* at the time of her historic encounter with the Japanese. Please write J. O. Jernigan, 1014 W. Eastland Ave., Nashville, Tenn.

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(Continued from page 140)

they'll probably hand me a rust-plated typewriter, instead of a gold-plated harp, for such writing odd-jobs that may be around the place.

Branched off into American folklore and Negro culture and history with emphasis on African survivals in the latter. In 1946 collaborated with my wife on a book for Dutton, "Dew on Jordan," dealing with the colorful and obscure religious sects of the Southern hills. Before that, a book for Creative Age Press called "Lighting Up Liberia."

Will have another book out soon—as soon as I can take out enough time from pounding publicity.

And it warms my heart to be in such a swell fraternity as that of the *Adventure* writers and readers.

We are glad to extend a welcome to these three men and are sure that the departmental association is going to be a mighty pleasant and informative one for all concerned.

ROY TINNEY, our *Ask Adventure* expert on shotguns, is Secretary and Counsel of the American Gunsmiths Guild. Writing on the letterhead of the organization—its address is Derryhoyle House, Natick, Mass.,—he explains—

> The American Gunsmiths Guild is a corporation not for profit, organized to improve, promote and advance the craft practiced by gunsmiths; bring about a better understanding between customer and craftsman; and give representative craftsmen the recognition they deserve; publish a Blue Book containing the names and addresses of capable and reputable gunsmiths, describing the work they are prepared to do and such other data as may be necessary to enable customers to select the gunsmith best fitted to perform the type of work they desire done. It is not a labor union. It will never make an effort to influence and control the wages gunsmiths pay their employees.
>
> Each member gunsmith will receive a copy of the Blue Book along with the special services the Guild is in a position to provide. Every applicant will be thoroughly investigated before his application is acted upon by the Board of Directors. By ignoring the inexperienced incompetents, they will be gradually sifted out, and the customers will be spared a lot of assorted grief. We want to do this job as well as it can be done and therefore ask for comments and suggestions from the readers of *Adventure*.

We are glad to publish Mr. Tinney's letter and we know he will welcome anything you care to write him.—K.S.W.

(Continued from page 135)

is today an over-supply of men in the unlicensed ratings. The unions have closed their books to new members, except in skilled ratings who have had previous sea experience as able seamen, cooks, and firemen-watertenders. And the Government is not at present certificating new men. I believe the Canadian Merchant Marine is in about the same position.

If you want to go to sea, the Cadet Corps seems to me to be the best way to do it. Here are a few facts, but you can get full information and literature by writing to the Supervisor, U. S. Merchant Marine Cadet Corps, Training Organization, U. S. Maritime Commission, Washington 25, D. C.

A candidate for admission to the Cadet Corps must be an unmarried male citizen of the United States, native-born or naturalized at least 10 years prior to the date of filing application. The Merchant Marine Academy, located at Kings Point, Long Island, gives a four-year course leading to a Bachelor of Science degree and a license as Third Mate or Third Assistant Engineer, depending upon which department one chooses. One full year of that time is spent at sea under actual working conditions, and four short cruises are made every year by the First Classmen (Seniors).

Boys applying for admission must be over 16½ years of age and less than 21 in order to take the scholastic test and they must be at least 17 when ordered to take the physical examination.

SLIPPERY when wet!

Query:—Can you suggest a grease for oiling the body to keep warm when swimming in cold water for long distances? I have tried olive oil in the past and it worked fairly well, but you know how expensive olive oil is these days!

— J. B. White
Westport, Conn.

Reply by Louis De B. Handley:—Oils wash off the body too readily to afford protection for any length of time in the water. Almost any kind of grease will prove more satisfactory.

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(Continued from page 115)

Butler went for Sod, smelling the rancid sweat of the big bosun. He doubled him with his knee; then rattled the man's teeth with a full arced right. The bosun whipped a capstan bar at him and Haines ducked. But the heavy oak stave tripped him and he went down in a mass of bodies and flailing legs. Somebody was yanking at his left foot.

"Sod! You fool, there's your chance!"

Haines had his hands strong on the door jamb and was pulling himself free of the brawl when Sod's gun butt fell on his skull. In the moment that he needed to shake the dizziness from him, they fell upon him. The deck hand and Sod had his arms pinned and Pennel's gun muzzle made a cold ring in the slack of his left jaw. "I'd like to!" Pennel grated and waggled the gun.

Beldon was in command now. He wasted no words now in amenities but silently rubbed his hairless face, studying Haines with lowering eyes.

"Take him ashore!" he snarled. "Pennel—the three of you . . . and don't return until he's dead!"

"Come along," Sod growled, his pain still in him, and jerked Haines to his feet. "This will be a pleasure!"

Haines never remembered the stumbling walk to the grove beyond the flare-lighted wharf. There were thick, jungle-like, matted water oaks, and willows beyond the gleam of the rush torch and tree roots, reaching for low water, tripped him as they herded him deep into the dense growth. But they were suddenly at the killing place, on a hummock of level ground and the big bosun was binding him to a fallen tree with a loop of rope yarn to his right ankle.

"Turn around," said Sod.

"I can face a gun muzzle," Haines said. "Go ahead."

He watched Sod walk twenty paces away, to where Moses Pennel and the deck hand stood. The three men blended with the wavering shadows of the torch-lit foliage. Oddly, Haines felt no particular hatred and it was almost as if he were alone in this murky dank swamp clearing.

Slowly Sod raised his arm and Haines watched the steel muzzle tip become a sharp cold ring in the fitful torchlight.

(To be concluded)

(Continued from page 128)

Larson flushed and his mouth opened to speak.

Pollard stopped him with a raised hand. "Save your explanations for the board of inquiry, Captain. I've heard enough. You may go."

When Larson had gone, Pollard leaned forward. "I didn't call you up here to be complimented, Hadley. The accident was a costly one. You'll take your chances with the inspectors along with Larson." He coughed. "But I want to commend your action in making the choice you did. Ships, or reputations, can be repaired. Dead men can't. That's something some shipmasters never learn. You have."

"Yes, sir," said Charley Hadley, "but, you see, I'm—"

Pollard interrupted him with the same imperious gesture of his hand. "Talk!" he snapped irritably. "I've had enough of it. A master should keep his mouth shut and his mind open. You've demonstrated you can do both. Don't spoil it." He scowled. "Well, don't stand there, Captain! Your ship is waiting for you. You'd best get aboard and see to your duties."

"But the—the *Holyoke,* sir," Charlie stammered. "She's—"

"Who said anything about the *Holyoke?*" Pollard barked impatiently. "She'll be here for a spell. Along with Peter Larson—if I know the inspectors. And I think I do. You'll be cleared without question, Hadley. I'm speaking now of the *Adelaide.* She's in need of a permanent master. Get your gear aboard her."

Charlie Hadley swallowed. "Yes, sir," he said, and grinned.

THE END

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(Continued from page 83)

"Yeah," said Lewis dolefully, "I reckon they will." He could hear the men coming toward him through the woods and he braced himself for the ordeal to follow. They'd be painting Buddy's face again with the blood of his deer and carrying him gloriously on their shoulders. But for him, Lewis, they'd have nothing but ridicule. They'd begin by cutting off his new checkered shirt right off up to the neck and then. . .

"You'll never live it down," muttered Mr. McCalleb.

"Nope," said Lewis. But inside he knew he had already lived it down. Tomorrow he would be out of the swamp and away from these men and their kind of hunting.

"What you gonna tell them?" said Mr. McCalleb.

"I'm gonna tell them," said Lewis—the words came easily once he began them, familiarly like a ritual. "I'm gonna tell them I reckon I just can't hit their kind of deer—that I just can't seem to get my sights on the cussed things."

They were Pop's words. He understood them now. He was thinking also of what Uncle Ephraim had said, "It takes at least one deer for a man to grow up on." But then, weren't there more ways than one for a man to grow up?

He'd been over all that before he pulled the trigger. He began to remember now with a growing pleasure how he had aimed at Old Whitey; then deliberately dropped his sights to miss him, then fired three shots carefully and harmlessly into the empty bank.

THE END

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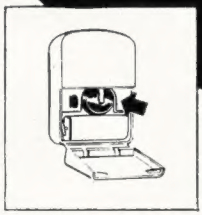

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